DE VERE;

OR, THE

MAN OF INDEPENDENCE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF TREMAINE.

My free drift
Halts not particularly, but moves itself
In a wide sea of wax.
SHAKSPEARE.

Power to do good, is the true and lawful end of aspiring: for good *thoughts* (though God accept them), yet, towards men, are little better than good dreams, except they be put in act; and that cannot be without power and place, as the vantage and commanding ground.
BACON.

MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL. THE TANJORE

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1827.

DE VERE.

CHAPTER I.

DECISION.

Belike she thinks that Proteus has forsook her.

Now by the honour of mine ancestry,
I do applaud thy spirit, Valentine.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE first month of the mourning of Constance was passed with her aunt in the privacy of Talbois; during which, Mortimer had taken order for the numerous things that needed attention at the castle. He had, as nearest male relation, in the quality of chief mourner, attended the funeral of his uncle, which was as private as the rank and consequence of the deceased could admit. Indeed, except by Lord Clanellan, whose regard for Constance, and Dr.

Herbert, whose respect for the De Vere part of the family, prompted it, only some neighbouring gentlemen attended. Not one of the former political associates of Lord Mowbray made either offer or inquiry; which, considering all things, can scarcely move our wonder. But there was one omission which was at least unexpected by all who knew not the truth. Mr. Clayton, however, was not to be blamed, if he was not seen at the grave of the man who had made him what he was: a duty which we are to suppose him to have been extremely anxious to fulfil; for he actually wrote to De Vere to ask permission to do so, and was refused.

"I expected as much," said Lord Cleveland's new confident. "It is really hard that one should be prevented from shewing one's attachment to the memory of an *early friend.*"

The world admired these sentiments; nor were the world wrong. The sentiments were good; and if Clayton concealed the fact, that when he made the offer, he knew there was that between him and the Mowbrays which would prevent its being accepted, how was the world to make the discovery?

Lady Elizabeth Partridge, and the Misses Partridge, (who had put on full mourning for

the *earl,* though they had, ever since his retirement, talked of him only as their foolish old *relation*), went so far as to say this was very pretty of Mr. Clayton, and very unkind of Mr. De Vere. This, however, was after the opening of the will, to which Lord Cleveland, as the nearest male relation after De Vere, and Mr. Partridge, as the husband of Lady Elizabeth, had been invited. Neither of the latter persons found themselves so much as mentioned, any more than Clayton; who, however, declared, that although his patron had often told him he should be handsomely remembered, he entirely *forgave* it.

The will, indeed, was of some years standing, and, except the sum of five thousand pounds to Lady Eleanor, left Lady Constance sole inheritrix of all the testator's property, with Lord Clanellan for her guardian.

Lord Cleveland and Mr. Partridge immediately returned to town, coolly observing, that it was not worth while to have called them so far on such an errand. Lord Cleveland, however, openly expressed his disappointment that the Cleveland part (no inconsiderable one) of the Mowbray fortune, had not been made to revert to the Cleveland name, in his person.

This was, in fact, an idea on which he had long dwelt, not only within his own mind, but on all public occasions that warranted the mention of it. So that, on his return to London, he every where spread the failure of his just expectations, and gave himself the air of an injured man.

All eyes were now turned, more than ever, to the great heiress; who, however, was too secluded and too much occupied by her recent loss, even to know how great a space she filled in the world's curiosity. Though she had reigned a whole season in the *beau monde*, her character was by no means yet understood. She was, indeed, thought the most *difficult* of young women. Alas! poor Constance, she thought not of difficulty; she only wished to be let alone. Much of the blaze that had surrounded her ha been, owing to her father, instigated by Cleveland for political purposes. From that she was delivered, and could, at least, now indulge the plan of life most agreeable to her own views. At present, indeed, the seclusion of what she called the dear forest, seemed the only life suitable to her frame of mind; and a visit from Lord and Lady Clanellan in their quality of friends and guardians, seemed all, or nearly all she wanted. But, except for a few days, to give her an ac-

count of her affairs, establish his house in the comforts necessary for her reception, and to receive Lord Clanellan, Mortimer came not. Yet, although there was no ostensible cause for his absence, his mother did not seem to wonder, much less to complain. Still it was matter of surprise to Constance, that he should thus, without apparent reason, absent himself from his only home.

The sensible heart, and high mind of De Vere had, indeed, sustained a perilous contest on this occasion. His love for his cousin was, perhaps, higher than ever; but the jealousy, we may say, the romance, of his pride, rose in proportion. The misery was, that he was not sure he was right; and as there was now no secret about it with his mother, he consulted her.

"To doubt," said she, "is to decide. If you are uncertain, let the decision be on the side of honour."

De Vere staid away.

But a reason for his absence was now luckily supplied by Harclai, who, to use his own expression, laid violent hands upon him, and carried him to visit his tenants at Wellsbury.

It may be remembered, that in the ancient map of the borough, a considerable portion of

land appeared once to have belonged to Mr. Okeover, now transferred to Mr. Flowerdale, a gentleman whom we hope the reader has not forgotten. Indifferent to borough politics, Flowerdale had not rejected an offer made by Lord Cleveland's steward, for the purchase of this land. The steward said it was an agreement; but this was denied by Harclai, who now acted for Flowerdale. But whether agreement or not, Harclai refused to fulfil it, and at length appeared in the shape of its legal owner himself, under a regular deed of sale from the quiet but right judging squire of Okeover.

In truth, from the moment Harclai had made the discovery of Flowerdale's possession in Wellsbury, and that the sale to Lord Cleveland was not completed, he bent all his endeavours to avail himself of the good will that had arisen between Flowerdale and De Vere, to transfer the interest of that estate to his friend. For this purpose, he introduced himself at Okeover, and made good his claim to be considered the representative of Mortimer, whom he found so high in Flowerdale's favour, that the bare opening of the treachery he had met with, determined him to close all negotiation with Lord Cleveland, and dispose of his land where it

might contribute to redeem the right, not be perverted to defend the wrong. As De Vere was absent, and as Harclai knew he could not afford to buy, to prevent delay, he made the purchase himself, and greeted him with it, upon proper securities, as soon as possible after his uncle's death.

This activity of Harclai, gave a blow to the Cleveland party in the borough; and thus, the plainness and apparent parsimony of his life, was made to tell in the cause of friendship. For it was by this parsimony alone that he was enabled to lay by hundreds per annum, which were almost all dedicated to generous purposes.

The freeholds thus acquired, were all the votes that remained in the borough, above those of the two parties that now divided it; and they gave a balanced, if not a preponderating interest to De Vere.

CHAPTER II.

HOPE.

I see some sparkles of a better hope,
Which elder days may happily bring forth.

SHAKSPEARE.

The affairs of the borough, thus opportunely urgent, furnished a fair pretext for that absence from his home which, for the reasons we have assigned, had been resolved upon by the master of Talbois. But another plea arose out of the service of Lady Constance herself. The marquess, in his quality of executor and guardian, had complained much of want of information respecting the fairest parts of her inheritance, situated in Yorkshire. Here she possessed the great mansion called Cleveland Hall, which took its title from the hills which surround it. It had not been visited for ages, that is, from the time of the death of old Mr. Cleveland, the last owner who had ever resided

there. It was this gentleman who had settled these estates upon Lord Mowbray, who was his grandson by his only child, the former countess; and Lord Mowbray, having ever found even Staffordshire too far from the royal atmosphere he was so fond of, had never once visited the place after he came into possession. Consigned entirely to stewards, there were many things that wanted explanation and rectifying, which nothing but a disinterested eye could effect, and as it was far from convenient for the marquess to go in person, an offer which De Vere made to accompany his solicitor, on behalf of his cousin, was gladly accepted, and richly repaid by the manner in which Constance seemed to feel it.

On approaching the hall, Mr. Blagrave, his fellow-traveller, told him that he must not expect much comfort where he was going. "For not only," said he, "it has not had a gentleman for its inhabitant for near fifty years, since your great grandfather died; but, with proper respect be it spoken, the tradition is, that Mr. Cleveland himself did not live too generously. Indeed, we are told that it was by the most pinching parsimony that he raised these estates to the immense value they now bear, forming, by much, the largest part of the Mowbray fortune."

This account of the solicitor was realized on their arrival at the house; for it was perfectly true, as he had represented it, that even in Mr. Cleveland's life-time, it had scarcely exhibited a less desolate appearance than it now bore. It should seem, indeed, even then, that it had been the prototype of those descriptive lines of Pope, on the mansion of a miser:

"Like some lone chartreux stands the good old hall,
Silence without, and fasts within the wall;
No raftered roofs with dance and tabor sound,
No noontide bell invites the country round;
Tenants with sighs the smokeless tow'rs survey,
And turn th' unwilling steeds another way;
Benighted wanderers the forest o'er,
Curs'd the sav'd candle, and th' unop'ning door:
While the gaunt mastiff, growling at the gate,
Affrights the beggar whom he longs to eat."

But, however inhospitable, this long neglected mansion was not only the best, but the sole head-quarters the travellers could find, as there was nothing like an inn within many miles. At the same time, from having given some days notice, the interior was not totally destitute of comfort, and the *dis*comfort De Vere made light of, for the sake of her whose service he

was upon. But his mind was far from happy, and his letters to his mother at this time, describe his feelings so particularly, that we cannot help giving an extract of one of them to the reader.

"We arrived at dusk, and, as the weather was warm, were rather surprised to see what seemed to be a splendid light through some of the windows, and still more to find that it proceeded from large wood fires, which had been kindled in the rooms we were to inhabit. But we were soon reconciled to them, and condescended with a good grace, to what, though perhaps an evil at this time at Talbois, was here a blessing to all but the swallows in the chimnies.

"I write to you from a magnificent, abandoned, and gloomy bed-chamber, with a state bed in it of green cut velvet, which I thought my great grandfather could never have procured with money. Mr. Blagrave, however, assured me he had so much pride mixed with his penury, that he had no doubt he purchased it upon some lucky speculation in the South Sea. Be this as it may, the chamber is half ruined, half furnished, and vast and cold; as much so, in these last respects, as my hopes. It was certainly not a

place for a hopeless man to come to; and yet I have something to relate about it, which a century or two ago, might have impressed me with I know not what divinations. The thought of the advantages which my journey may procure to her for whom I undertook it, bears me up; but except for this, I could not find comfort in this place. The very extent and magnificence of the property, only seem to increase my distance from *her*. It is quite extraordinary my uncle should never have visited what may be rendered flourishing beyond all thought. But the place itself is half ruined from neglect, and the first evening seemed ominous to me, in the frame of mind I was in. Leaving my companion to give the necessary orders for our accommodation, I walked through a long line of neglected garden, from twilight till dark night; or at least it was only lighted by the stars, and I really invoked the 'woods and wilds, whose melancholy gloom accorded with my soul's sadness.' In this solitude, *her* perfections were more than ever impressed upon me; but so was my despair. To think of these estates, added to those of Castle Mowbray, made me more alive than ever to the failures of my late endeavours to achieve, what, I am not wanting in

friends to tell me, I have too many wayward notions to accomplish. In short, it seems the height of madness to hug this delicious passion still to my heart, when, as long as there is this distance between us, no power on earth shall tempt me to disclose it.

"But hopelessness in love is not the only one I feel. The plans designed for me by my uncle have failed, I will not say from what causes; satisfied that *you* do not lay them to the account of an improper pride. They have failed, not only without substituting others in their places, but, by making others too late, have rendered all abortive.

"Such were my thoughts during my walk, protracted till the damps of the evening; the recollection, however, that I had abandoned my companion in this lone place, drove me in. I sat down with him at supper, and rather envied him an appetite, which seemed not the less for a total want of care. Whether it was his civility, on seeing me still abstracted, or sheer fatigue at so cheerless a companion, he soon left me alone: and I retired to the gloomy state bed-room I have mentioned, where, little disposed to sleep, I abandoned myself to the same thoughts which had so lately occupied me in my walk.

And very appropriate were they to such a place, for all about me seemed to exhibit an abortive attempt at what could not be accomplished; shall I call it an unfinished, and, therefore, an abandoned commencement, of what was intended to be magnificence, but had failed? 'Fit emblem,' said I to myself, 'of what I thought to be, and what I am;' and I looked at the velvet hangings, which clothed a deal worm-eaten bedstead, and an immense chimney, meant to receive marble columns, for which, however, bricks had been substituted. Upon the sides of the room too, were the same marks of unexecuted purpose, in compartments of the wainscot, made for pictures, but which had never been placed there, while their spaces had been covered with old paper.

"The mood this generated, did not add to the cheerfulness of that I was already in. I, who had always been such an idolizer of hope, began to despair. I thought of the many things which had been said of my once adored deity, by the observers of the world, and they did not inspirit me. 'Yes,' said I, as I walked the gloomy half furnished chamber, 'Feltham was right, when he said that Hope 'often fooled us with silken delusions,' and Halifax, when he called her 'a

kind cheat,' and observed, that 'she was a bad guide, though very good company.' Then, recollecting what I had felt two summers before, and what I was now, I agreed with the quaint but wise chancellor, that 'hope might be a good breakfast, but a bad supper.'

"This mood was so strange and desponding, that I am afraid you will be ashamed of your son; and I should perhaps be ashamed myself to record it, but that it is an introduction to the sort of wonder which followed; such it was to me, think of it as you will. For after betaking myself to bed, more for form's sake than any thing else, and being kept completely awake with these thoughts till the early twilight dawned, I grew restless, rose literally with the lark, and to refresh myself, sought to leave my chamber through a door which, the servants had told me, opened upon the garden. I did so, and pursued a weedy walk, conducting me to a labyrinth of yew, which had been clipped, but was now so entirely overgrown, that it added to the difficulty of the maze.

"In fact, I thought I was lost, when I found myself suddenly standing before the statue of that very identical Hope, with whom I had so recently quarrelled.

"The figure was not ill executed, and she was surrounded with all her emblems. One arm was extended, with a finger pointing to an opening almost imperceptible, which in fact turned out to be a path leading out of the labyrinth: the other rested on her anchor, and held a scroll, on which, with some difficulty, I read—

'In Hope, a kynge doth goe to warre;
In Hope, a lover loves full long;
In Hope, the merchant sails from far:
In Hope, just men doe suffer wrong;
In Hope, the ploughman sows his seed;
Thus Hope helps thousands at their need.
Then faint not, heart, among the rest,
Whatever chance, hope thou the best.'"

Such was one of the letters of De Vere to his mother, which he concluded, by owning that this singular accident had elevated him for a few minutes, as if portentous. Nor laugh at him, reader, for the visions which seemed either to depress or raise his fancy. There are moments when the best of us, clouded by disappointment, and uncertain of the future, especially when in solitude, and abandoned by all but heaven, catch at that future with hope, or let it go in despair,

according to our temperament, though alike unaccountable on any rational grounds. Let the puffed up man, proud either of his wisdom or prosperity, remember this; nor despise De Vere for either this temporary depression, or causeless elevation.

But the neighbourhood of Cleveland Hall afforded another discovery to De Vere, more substantial than a mere emblematic statue, however agreeable. In returning from a distant manor, through the village of Kirkharold, he stopped to view the ancient school-house, a picturesque compound of gable and cornice, in the most quaint taste of the days of Elizabeth.

Struck with its antiquity, he entered by a pair of old gates, now almost off their hinges, into a great court before the building, new laid with greensward. Here he saw a gentleman and his servant, measuring a circular sweep, with a chain, and a lady, of uncommon elegance of shape, seemingly giving directions. He would have retired, but what was his astonishment on the gentleman turning towards him, to behold Rivers! Could he have doubted it indeed, all doubt was ended when he came nearer to the lady, for there was no mistaking the pensive eye, and clear dark beauty of Zerlina.

...ARAJA BEREG...

We may suppose their mutual pleasure, and mutual surprise, though Rivers seemed to have less of the latter than his friend.

"How good of you," said he, "to find us out so soon, and in such a wild sequestered spot; more hid, and less in the track of life than St. Sauveur itself."

De Vere expressed his joy at the meeting, but professed his utter ignorance of the meaning of these last words.

"Why, I wrote to you," said Rivers, "the moment I arrived in England, which was only ten days ago, to tell you what brought us home, and whither we were bound."

"Your letter then is still at Talbois, where I have not been this fortnight," said De Vere, "and the chance of my finding you here is the most surprising thing in the world."

"I am sure, then," replied Rivers, "I may say the same; but come into our venerable hermitage, where they are preparing tea for us, and tell us by what adventure (for I see it is one) we are brought together."

De Vere protested the adventure must be all on his side, for there was little romantic in visiting an estate on behalf of a relation who had lately succeeded to it, and could not visit it herself.

"No more," said Rivers, "than that a gentleman should take possession of a house he has purchased, which, in truth, is also the business which has brought *me* here."

This produced mutual explanations: and it turned out that Rivers, true to his character of acting upon sudden and strong impressions, upon reading the English newspapers one day at Bordeaux, where he had wandered down from Languedoc, saw, among the sales advertised, the old school-house of Kirkharold, with its little domain of garden and field. "Mrs. Rivers will tell you," said he, "that I changed colour upon reading it; for in truth it had been the paradise of my early childhood, having been the first school I had been at till I went to Winchester. I knew and loved every tree and bush without, and every casement and cornice within. I could reckon up to exactness the number of pannels in this oak parlour; and the play-ground there, where I let those ragged boys and girls continue to revel at present, is not more known to them than it was to me. In short, our earliest are our sweetest associations; my heart thrilled at the thought that this dear old place might, for a very little money, be mine. Zerlina wanted to see England, and, to tell you the truth, I was a little tired of France, and so—"

"You made the purchase," said De Vere, "and posted home on the wings of *imagination.*"

"You have hit it exactly," replied Rivers.

De Vere rejoiced, not merely for his own sake, for he thought, if ever his cousin visited Cleveland Hall, how happy she would be in such a companion as Zerlina. He mentioned his hope of it to the latter, and described Constance so glowingly, that Mrs. Rivers's imagination was kindled to a degree worthy her husband's in the prospect of such a friend—a prospect afterwards most happily realized.

CHAPTER III.

CONTENT.

I am for the house with the narrow gate, which I take it to be too little for people to enter.

SHAKSPEARE.

Before he left Yorkshire, De Vere also made another acquaintance, which, as a picture of happy resignation to an apparently inferior lot in the world, we cannot help describing, though it led to no results of consequence to this history, except that best result of enlarging the number of those whom, for their qualities and virtues, we respect,—always a lasting and a real gain.

The little donative of Kirkdale in this remote Cleveland, had been given by Lord Clanellan, its patron, to a Mr. Fairfax, the friend of his youth at college, and afterwards occasionally in the world. It amounted to barely one hundred

and fifty pounds a year, some glebe, and a very small parsonage, the very reverse of that romantic Dovedale where Archer sighed out his discontents. It had a garden, indeed, and a mountain stream at the bottom, which Fairfax often watched, applying to it the beautiful moral strain in the description of Denham:—

> "Hastening to pay its tribute to the sea,
> Like mortal life to meet eternity."

That Fairfax should find delight in such applications, lets us enough into the character of his mind; but it would take long time to describe the effects of his practical virtue upon the circle (homely indeed, but not uninteresting) of his rustic neighbours. Cleveland was not a district where many gentlemen abode; and so remote and wild was this part of it, as to appear a back settlement of England: so that the residence of so kind and civilized a being as Fairfax, was a real blessing to its rough inhabitants. They found it so in its influence upon their religious habits, their morals, and their softened manners, and repaid it by a personal love, which the great ones of the world, amidst all their splendour, are too often without. No one in-

deed knows, who has not witnessed it, the immense value of that modest, but respectable character, the parish priest. To think him paid by his stipend, is mockery; but he is richly so, by the genuine love, and well-earned deference, shewn him by his flock. Fairfax was one of these parish priests; and, unlike Archer in his ambition, would not have exchanged his humble, but self-sufficing lot, for all the reputation, and even all the expectation of a court-chaplain.

And yet he had a fine mind, many of the acquisitions of learning, and even the flowers of literature. So much so, that he had often been a kind of study with the marquess, who used to prophecy that his humble satisfactions would not last, but give way to something more exciting from being more polished. They did last, however, spite of temptation.

"When you go to Cleveland Hall," said the marquess to De Vere, in London, previous to his journey, "try to find out a Mr. Fairfax, the vicar of a village among the hills, called Kirkdale. He has puzzled my notions of human nature, though, to be sure, these cannot be very extensive, or very profound, which have been formed chiefly upon what I have seen at St.

James's, or the common routine of life. But, in truth, he *has* puzzled them; for his total want of worldly ambition does not arise either from ignorance or apathy: on the contrary, his stores are large, his tastes good, and his feelings active. So much so, that, not many years ago, I thought I could not do better than to try to procure him as a tutor for my nephew and heir, and at the same time as an agreeable companion for myself."

"And could this fail?" asked De Vere.

"You shall see," said the marquess: and he took from his scrutoire the answer which Fairfax had returned to his offer. It was in all the freedom of their old college-habits together, which indeed had never been remitted.

"You tempt me," said Fairfax, "from my coleworts and my gooseberry bushes, and propose to me a higher lot in the ease and comfort of your house, the elegance of your table, and, above all, in your own society, and that of persons fitter for me, you are pleased to say, than the uncouth people I am among; and all you ask in return, is—what I allow would be a pleasure—that I should superintend the improvement of your nephew. Charming, on paper! but will the picture be realized? Can it be so? As to

elegance, you know, I admire it. But I enjoy it here. A clean cloth within doors, and a turf walk without, with roses which your garden cannot exceed, satisfy my love of elegance as much as all that an upholsterer can do for *you*. Then, as to your table, what can it supply which my beans and bacon will not equal? Your good friends indeed. But will they be good company to me? Will they look upon your nephew's tutor as having a right to mix with them? Will *you yourself always* do so? Shall I always have liberty even when alone? May I lounge out of doors at will, seek the lark in the morning, or the thrush at night-fall? And if the evening be mild, may I stray I know not whither, or wander I know not where, and yet return unwatched, unblamed, be sure of a good-humoured welcome home, and find an honest smile to wait upon me at supper as I do here? To be sure, that supper is only milk, or a little fruit and clear water. But so to me would it be if I were with you; only yours would, perhaps, be served in silver, mine in earthenware. Upon the whole, then, excuse me, if with a grateful heart for your offer, I respectfully decline it."

De Vere was charmed with this letter It

suited the then disposition of his own mind; and, from his ill success in opening a prospect of fortune, he was not ill pleased to think that a man of fine feelings, with a mind fit to be the companion of Lord Clanellan, could find happiness among coleworts and gooseberry bushes. His visit to him, therefore, was not delayed.

He reached Kirkdale at least in a pleasing moment, to view both itself and its pastor. It was one of those evenings after the glow of the day was over, when Nature, seemingly set free, sheds sweetness from garden, field, and wood. The birds sang gladness after hours of silence, and the whole hamlet smiled after labour done. De Vere found Fairfax under an elm at his door, conversing freely with two or three of his parishioners, simple folk, who were moralizing on the advance of the season. One of them at the moment he came up, while leaning on his hoe, had just observed, that he thought it impossible for a man to be what he called an "*ateist.*" De Vere afterwards thought much of Lady Elizabeth Partridge and her daughters, and that whole set, in comparison with this homely reasoner, who was a sturdy old man, who had never stirred from his own hills, and yet presumed to talk religious philosophy.

Upon the approach of a stranger, the group dispersed, wishing their vicar good night with heartiness, which was returned with kindness, when De Vere presented him a letter from Lord Clanellan.

He was instantly received with respect and pleasure by Fairfax, whom he found, as he expected, plain, sensible, moderate, and unaffected. His establishment was small, being not married, and a garden labourer, and housekeeper, all the servants he had. Nor had he much society equal to himself. There were always, however, one or other of his parishioners, waiting on a bench near his house, to obtain his advice, or a little kind notice, which to them was a gratification for the rest of the day. His books, his glebe, and his garden, and rides through the wide lying population of his parish, as they demanded his attention, amply filled up his time; and though fond of more cultivated companions than he had, he was not miserable for the want of them. He had, without losing his own resources, lowered himself to their simplicities. "They have not, of course," said he, in answer to De Vere's inquiries upon the subject, when they got more acquainted, "any polish of mind, but their hearts make up for it.

I have not myself any great knowledge of the world, and it is true, as my noble friend sometimes says in his letters, my name will never be known. But *why should it be known*—and to *whom?* To mortals like myself? I am known to the *immortal*, which is preferable; and he is better known to *me* from being seen through a vision, free from the distractions of the world."

Not a word of this was lost upon De Vere, who, long after he returned from Yorkshire, remembered this unlooked for picture of humble, but happy independence, and remembered it always with comfort, under struggles and temptations in very different scenes

CHAPTER IV.

A TRIAL.

> Alas! a kind of godly jealousy
> (Which I beseech you call a virtuous sin,)
> Makes me afeard.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

On the return of De Vere from Yorkshire, after giving an account of his mission to the marquess, he passed some days in the tranquillity of Talbois, only varied by an excursion to Wellesbury, whence his party seemed daily to increase; and in the midst of the hopes and plans which this seemed to create, he received a memorable visit from his friend, the President.

It was asserted by Harclai that this visit was political, and that the President had brought a woman in his hand. In part this was true: for many were then the portents in the atmosphere

of politics, similar to those which were so awfully sung by the poet, as belonging to the atmosphere of nature, when the sun—

> "In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds
> On half the nations, and with fear of change,
> Perplexes monarchs."

The specious eloquence of Lord Oldcastle could not conceal the danger to his power, occasioned by his timid and vacillating policy. He had employed the means to strengthen it which had usually been resorted to by most of his predecessors; he had addressed himself to the great families, made the crown rain influence, and endeavoured to buy off the most active of his opponents, by offering them any share they pleased of what alone he supposed them to aim at—place. But he knew not the men he had to deal with, nor, from the school in which he had been bred, did he know that ambition might be a patriotic and generous, as well as a personal and self-interested passion. He knew not that there might be other motives for aspiring after power than the mere love of it. In particular, he knew not the real character of Wentworth, when he went even so far as to offer to

vacate the government, and form a new one upon terms of sincere equality. Wentworth replied, that his object being a total change of measures, he could hardly expect it without a change of men. That to do all for individuals, and nothing for the country, would only bolster up a sinking cause; that that power was most secure which was founded upon public opinion, and that minister most a friend to his king, who carried with him the support of his country. Wentworth held that the public were an honest public; and their representatives, with all their defects, honest representatives, whose reason, fairly appealed to, would fairly decide; but, kept in the dark, and misled by false pretences, there would be no end to the efforts, to say nothing of the mean arts necessary to influence their support. He added, indeed, that if Lord Oldcastle would acknowledge and act upon these principles, he would have no objection to act with him; but he owned that, from their very different opinions upon the science of government, he had little hope of that cordiality of union which alone would make a treaty between them advisable.

Lord Oldcastle received this answer with alarm, mixed with something like contempt.

He said to his confidents, that Mr. Wentworth was a warm-headed visionary, with no more knowledge than a child in the art of governing, and totally ignorant of the character of his countrymen, who had too little virtue themselves to be so elevated in the scale of political existence; that public opinion was a good thing could you come at it; but that private views, passion, and faction, for ever prevented it from being really known, and he therefore knew no where else to look for it except in the majorities of the two Houses of Parliament.

It was clear that statesmen who so widely differed, could never come together. The treaty ended, and meanwhile the administration had been so constantly changing, and in a crisis which required the utmost wisdom there had been so little stability, that the sovereign himself, who had the most truly British heart in all his dominions, felt and deferred to the more liberal policy of Wentworth.

In truth, England itself was changed, though so insensibly, that hackneyed politicians had not discovered it. The amazing spread of improvement of all kinds, in knowledge, in wealth, in real independence, (different from the turbulence of earlier times, but in so far, only more

to be respected) had made its inhabitants a new people, while the ministers of those days still governed that people as they would have governed the old. The long reach of mind, the genius, and the daring of Wentworth, had discovered this; it was seconded by his heart, and in that heart he had fondly conceived the character of a patriot minister. It must be owned, that in this he went before the age; but we owe it to him, that with all the usual cries of faction which have been raised against succeeding ministers, the characters of public men have been wholly changed; and that for many years we have been governed with a purity, a disregard to self, and a sincere attention to the public weal, which, while they make high-minded ambition still more honourable, would, half a century ago, have been thought Utopian.

The principles and objects of Wentworth were the delight of Herbert, and he had been perpetually exciting De Vere with their development, and their praises. "I have long known and admired them," said De Vere, "but I have been spoiled of my arms, and can give him little support till I recover my rights, if ever I can fairly recover them at Wellsbury."

In his zeal, Herbert proposed to Wentworth

that room should be made for him among the seats of some of his great friends. "He will never accept it," said Wentworth, and related the denial which he had himself experienced.

The death of Lord Mowbray had altered many things; and as he had possessed parliamentary influence to which his heiress would succeed, the President not unnaturally looked to that quarter as the obvious means of placing De Vere, where he longed to see him, by the side of Wentworth. "The battle, and the hoped-for victory are impending," said he; "it will be too late, or at least not so creditable, only to join the standard when it is won." In order, therefore, to further these views in regard to De Vere, Herbert determined to betake himself to the Lady Constance, and avail himself of the respect which she felt for him, and the intimacy which she so evidently desired to see him cultivate with her.

Of the parliamentary friends of Lord Mowbray, one who had long been in a bad state of health was expected to die. It was in order that De Vere might succeed to him, that the active Herbert determined to lay his case before his cousin; and to obtain his sanction for this proceeding was now the object of his visit to Talbois.

To Herbert's astonishment, when he opened the matter to De Vere, in their walk by the canal, he met with a determined refusal. "It is not," said De Vere, "that I am not alive to its advantages, or that I do not agree with you in thinking, that, where the obligation springs out of an interest so purely of a family nature, there can be little onerous or embarrassing. But there are reasons, there are personal feelings in this matter, of which I alone can be the judge, and which impel me, even imperiously, to avoid this kind interference."

Herbert deplored this inflexibility. "If it arise from independence of spirit," said he, "you are too rigid. Lady Constance is now the head of your mother's family; and heads of families only consult their own consequence, in surrounding themselves by relations as their political supporters."

"Lady Constance," said De Vere, "is no politician; and if I know her, will not become one."

"The greater the necessity," replied the President, "for putting herself in the hands of a man of honour. And who so fit an adviser as her nearest male relation?"

"A husband," said De Vere, firmly enough;

"and in that case, who is to foresee the changes, the interference, perhaps the overthrow, of all we might have counted upon? No; if my cousin ask my advice, however little qualified, I will give it; but never will I profit by it to benefit myself."

Herbert called this romantically unbending, and complained that De Vere had abandoned him for the school of Harclai. He even attempted to banter; but it was a subject, as connected with his cousin, too delicate for the doubting heart of De Vere, not to put down the attempt at once. He indeed could not help saying, with some seriousness, if not stiffness, that there were things of which one's own feelings could alone be the judge, and on which the best friends might make unfortunate mistakes.

Herbert eyed him with surprise, but seeing that he was assuming that air of lofty determination, which every year became more and more prominent in his character, he feared that there was some deeper principle of action concerned in it than he would be able to shake; and with his usual tact he desisted from the attempt.

Returned to the house, however, he betook himself to Lady Eleanor, and set before her,

as forcibly as he could, the danger to his fair hopes which might attend De Vere if he pushed this impregnable spirit too far. He avowed the design of his visit and its failure, and observed that there was not a noble house in the kingdom which did not govern itself by the maxims he had recommended. Lady Eleanor heard him with composure, yet seemed to share the pride of her son. "It would seem strange," she said, "if De Vere were to act under the standard of a woman, however free; but when the power of that woman was liable to be transferred to another, she could not help thinking the decision of her son was right."

The President supposed from this, that the matter had been already settled between the mother and son; and he took his leave, in all friendship, though perhaps a little piqued. He had been so used to see persons of all ranks and ages defer to his opinion, that, to say the least of it, he felt disappointed; and being lofty enough himself, upon being afterwards requested by Lady Constance, on the advice of Lord Clanellan, to make this very offer to De Vere, he declined all interference with persons who had, he said, their own feelings and principles of action.

"I know not what this means," said Constance to Lady Clanellan, in some uneasiness; "but I fear this Mortimer of ours is prouder than we imagined."

This was said while expecting a visit from him at Castle Mowbray, where he had been invited by Lord Clanellan, for the express purpose of deliberating upon the plan of action to be pursued by Constance in regard to her political influence. For the event expected had happened, the seat was vacant, and she had already been besieged, either in her own person, or through her guardian, with applications from would-be successors of all descriptions.

Had she been less a subject of sorrow, or known as much of the world as she did in later times, she might have been even amused at the various developments that were made to her. By some honest blunderers, terms were offered which must not be mentioned; by others who thought they disguised things better, political creeds were stated, professing to be explicit, but from which any line of conduct might be pursued in almost any event. Whigism and Toryism, court and country, king's friends, and people's friends, all made proposals; and inexperienced and averse as she was to be thought a

party woman, so various were the principles of the applicants, that one would have fancied Lady Constance had been of all the parties of the state. In the dilemma occasioned by this crisis, Mortimer arrived.

Spite of his pleasure always at seeing her, there was, about this time, fast gaining upon him, a formality of manner which, however unintentional, he was sufficiently conscious of, as well as that he could not prevent it.

The pleasure of Constance at seeing him, was checked by this manner, and she was embarrassed, besides, with the project she had in contemplation of bringing him where his friends most wished to see him, without appearing to oblige him. In truth, though there was no formality in *her* manner, the evident constraint of her cousin's demeanour had been in a degree caught by Constance herself; and though her heart overflowed with good will, though she felt even grateful to him for a thousand mute kindnesses, which were not the less felt because they were unblazoned, it is certain that she had not now that buoyant and happy frankness towards him which had characterized their earlier acquaintance. But not on this account had he the less occupied her thoughts. On the contrary,

the seeming mystery of his conduct engaged most of the attention she could spare from the contemplation of her late loss. He had lately avoided her: she knew not why; yet his sympathy with her situation, and his attention to her interests and comfort, had been all, and more, perhaps, than even a brother could have shewn. On the other hand, it should seem that she was the last person in the world from whom he would accept of obligation. This was, to say the best of it, strange; and it had formed the subject of many a silent reverie, which had been any thing but discouraged by the seclusion of her life.

These reveries had become habitual to Constance, and under a different impression in regard to her cousin, they might have ended in a comfort she much wanted. Bereaved of the protection of her parent, and of the interest which even his stiff, cold character, could not banish from her heart, her thoughts wandered wide, in search of a resting place. Her fortune and pride of place did not seem to afford her any. Grandeur she had tried; and though not averse to it, and still less to the charms of elegance, of which she was indeed herself the type, neither grandeur nor elegance had been able to

fill the void which she felt in her heart. While her father lived, and so many interests were created by the task of giving him comfort, this had been the less felt. But he was gone, and with him that authority, her deference to which had weighed with her so much in altering her former behaviour to her cousin. The world indeed!—but she was out of the world—and in it, she knew not one, no, not one, whose high, yet respectful bearing, coupled at the same time with easy cheerfulness, had conciliated so much of her regard or esteem, as that of Mortimer had done.

But while her heart told her this was but true, something else whispered her that her heart had no business with it. Mortimer had shewn every sort of anxiety for her interests, but none for her favour. He had even seemed to shun her; and when forced by situation to be in her presence, was no longer that delighted and delightful cousin, who had so often amused the playful hour by vivacity, and the serious one by something better. Constance was not made to throw away her kindness; but her gratitude for his services, if they might be so called, and her esteem, (amounting to admiration,) of his character and manners, kept him much in her thoughts.

She could not help, therefore, feeling sad when she surveyed the beautiful park which Castle Mowbray overlooked, and thought of the contrast which its now vast solitude exhibited, to the same scene in the preceding year.

But though she could not feel what may be called tenderness towards a man who seemed so little anxious to court it, yet, as her relation and friend, no feeling forbade a deep interest in his welfare. It had therefore become a favourite occupation with her to form plans for his advancement, as much as she could, without compromising that modest pride of character which always belonged to her.

"Yes," said she, "I wish to serve him if he would let me, and if I could do so without—" she could not go on; and though she often got thus far in these soliloquies, for the life of her she never could finish; and she would fly to music, or Lord and Lady Clanellan, to dissipate her thoughts.

Lord Clanellan, however, saw no harm in these wishes, when they transpired, as they sometimes did; and when he had ascertained that it was her desire that Mortimer should be not merely consulted, but requested to represent the political interests of her family, he immediately proposed

the visit we have mentioned, for the express purpose of arranging a business always so important, and which might prove so critical.

In doing this, Lord Clanellan was actuated by a principle very different from that which governed most of the political men of his day. As he was the general supporter of government, and as De Vere's attachment to Mr. Wentworth was perfectly well known, it seemed but the mere natural course of things, that Lord Clanellan should make use of his influence, as trustee for the property, which gave the power to return a member, by naming one who would support the people in place. Nor had representations to this effect by Lord Oldcastle and others been wanting.

But all were without success. Lord Clanellan, however singular in the opinion, did not think that in politics, as in war, every advantage was fair. With a delicacy, therefore, as well as justice, peculiar to himself, he left the whole matter to be decided by his ward, with the assistance of her family, in the same manner as if she had been of age, and her legal rights already perfected.

De Vere, on learning this, was quite enough aware of the code which usually governed the

morality of party, to be exceedingly impressed with this liberal conduct of the marquess. It was not that to a mind like De Vere's, such a decision seemed surprising. But perpetual struggle had so blunted natural feeling upon these points, and general practice had so reconciled honour to what in other cases it would have rejected with disdain, that had the conduct been different, it might have perhaps been excused. He therefore openly expressed his admiration of Lord Clanellan's liberality, while Constance, who heard him, thought it the most natural thing in the world.

"And yet," said De Vere, "my cousin may live to think differently. At present, she is but a young party-woman."

"'Tis an odious distinction," said Constance, "even if it were not far above my capacity." Then glancing at a pile of letters before Lord Clanellan, "Here are things," continued she, "which puzzle—some which even frighten me. One talks of 'the march of public opinion;' another says, I can prevent the *ruin* of my country, and one offers me money."

Both De Vere and the marquess assured her that she had a great deal to learn, as well as to unlearn, if this frightened her; and that there

were ladies who would envy her more for this one advantage of political influence, than all she possessed besides.

"And do these understand the march of public opinion?" asked Constance.

"They would at least be affronted to have it questioned," said De Vere.

"And save their country, and take money?" continued Constance.

"That we must not say," answered De Vere. "But though they might not take gold, they would revel in power; and hence, when there is real influence, there is no female character that fills the eye so much as a female politician."

"And this, Mortimer, you wish me to become?"

"Not so, indeed," replied De Vere. "I would as soon see you take your seat in the House itself. But having this influence, Lord Clanellan has done rightly, as well as honourably, in calling upon you to use it."

"Heaven knows," observed Constance, "it is neither my wish nor my taste to do so; and I would gladly leave it to those of my sex who, you say, envy me this possession." Then, changing to somewhat of a mournful tone, she added,

"I am sure I know not why, for it never gave happiness to him who is gone."

It was evident she was thinking of her father, and De Vere eyed her, as he always did under these soft impressions, with an interest which all the dazzle of her beauty, set off as it was by the grace of her manner, could not of itself alone command.

Lord Clanellan, however, now brought the conversation to a point, by observing, that though he had affected to leave his ward free as to the party she should support, it had only been a subterfuge; for that in effect he had used all his power and authority as guardian, by proposing a name to her. De Vere hastily asked "who?"

"Yourself," said Lord Clanellan. "But as I am to know nothing of your politics or plan of campaigning, it will best become me to leave you to yourselves; only," added he, with a laugh, "recollect that as *I* am a general supporter of his majesty's government, I may be accused of treason if you are too factious."

So saying, this right thinking nobleman withdrew, in order to leave the cousins more at ease in the discussion which he naturally thought would follow.

De Vere was wholly unprepared for any thing so personal. He had come, expecting a mere general discussion. In a moment he found himself involved in the very question he most wished to avoid.

Nor was the embarrassment of Constance less. Her guardian, it is true, had saved her from the appearance of having made an advance to her cousin; but a thousand little alarms, from what she thought the awkwardness of her situation, could not help shewing themselves; and thus the two persons who esteemed one another most in the world, seemed most afraid to enter upon a very plain question.

De Vere broke a minute's silence, by observing how very delicately her guardian had behaved.

"He always does so," said Constance, "and I am fortunate that with such friends as himself and the marchioness, and such relations as my dear aunt and you, I may be relieved from what I see would otherwise be too much for me."

"Few would think it so," said De Vere; "but it is not every one who is only more modest for being much distinguished. May I ask your feelings as to the line of policy which you wish your parliamentary friends (whoever they may be) to pursue?"

"Whoever they may be, Mortimer: I thought that had all been settled, and that you would be good enough to relieve me from a burthen for which I am not fit."

"Always feminine, always delightful," returned De Vere; "you will never move out of the province of your gentle nature. But at least you must have some bias: I will not say any *personal* wish as to party, but some opinion as to the men you think most capable of serving the crown, by preserving the country."

"That is a deep question," observed Constance, giving a melancholy smile, "for one so left." And she looked at the mourning which she still wore. De Vere thought she never looked so perfect, while she went on: "I certainly can neither love nor esteem Lord Oldcastle, and still less Lord Cleveland. But for them, perhaps *he* would be alive," (and she gave a deep sigh.) "I am also free to say, Mr. Wentworth has all my esteem, my admiration, and were wishes therefore to decide, they are all for him. Nevertheless I am sensible, (and it is the only political reflection I have ever made) that private wishes ought to have nothing to do with public conduct; and if you and the marquess will really make me talk of things I so much dislike, I

know there ought to be other reasons than wishes. I have also another feeling, and that a deep one."

Her cousin entreated her to continue.

"I am fearful of myself," proceeded she, hesitatingly. "I thought my poor father so ill used, that I should question my own heart's justice, were I to wish ill to Lord Oldcastle."

"Excellent, admirable Constance!" exclaimed De Vere, "you will almost make me love a female politician."

"You will soon retract," continued Constance; "for you will pity my ignorance when I tell you I have no more to say, except that I think Lord Clanellan is so good, that the cause he supports cannot be bad. Perhaps I may add, that in my love for the good king, in which I have been bred, I am puzzled to know how it can be so loyal to oppose ministers whom he approves."

De Vere smiled a little. And here let us own that we give these speeches, rather out of our attachment to truth and nature, than from any commendation they afford of the political knowledge of the speaker. In fact, they must appear to all who are politicians, and to many who are not politicians, perfectly silly. But not so to De

Vere, who showed his cousin that she might be mistaken, but loved her for being so. He observed to her, that Lord Clanellan, being one who gave a general support to all governments, reserving particular questions, he could not be said to be of any particular party. He also satisfied her, from the nature of the constitution, that loyalty to the king might sometimes be even best evinced by opposing his minister. "But God forbid," added De Vere, "that your other repugnance, drawn from the questioning your own heart on Lord Oldcastle's usage of him who is gone, should ever be disturbed by me. 'Tis a feeling too honourable to the pure nature of my cousin, not to be held for ever sacred. Keep it therefore enshrined till you pronounce your own acquittal; and I will only add, that never can you have a purer judge."

"You make this too serious, Mortimer," observed Constance, (and yet his words were very sweet to her); "I have told you my feeling about myself, because I felt bound to do it; but this ought not to influence *you*, on whom I would gladly disburthen myself of a weight to which I am not equal. Nay," continued she, seeing him rather moved, "you are not obliged to me; so

check your thanks if you please, for it was my guardian that suggested it. But even if I had proposed it myself, think not that a De Vere, my aunt Eleanor's son, could ever be any thing but free as the air."

She said this in some agitation, for she feared, from certain indications of countenance, and half expressions, that Mortimer was about to refuse the proposal. Nor was she wrong; for, to her disappointment, and almost dismay, with a thousand excuses, and as many thanks, and murmurs about obligations, mingled too with a tenderness, as well as admiration in his looks, which came from a deep struck heart, he lamented the impossibility of profiting by her intentions.

Constance was astounded. She had expected another result—she had hoped relief from him, hoped for his guidance, hoped a thousand things which she could not well define, but in all which she was now disappointed.

At length recovering a little from her surprise, she said, "And is this the end of all? Am I to be left still without guide or help? And does my cousin, as well as my guardian, abandon me? This is indeed to be an orphan!"

And with this, from we know not what mixed

feeling (it was certainly not mere disappointment, on the immediate subject,) she let fall a tear, which she hastily brushed away, as if ashamed of it.

De Vere was disconcerted, he was grieved and agitated at these emotions of his cousin, which seemed to tax him with ingratitude—at best with ungraciousness; and he felt peculiarly the allusion she had made to her orphan state. The usual effect too of beauty in distress was felt doubly by a heart not only generous in itself, but altogether devoted.

He could that instant, instead of persevering in his resolution, have willingly thrown himself at her feet, confessed his love, and though she rejected it, implored her to command him as she pleased.

But he was a man of high purpose. He was endowed with no *right* to *direct* her conduct; and, therefore, he felt painfully, that though for a time they might act together in principle, still he should hold his power of acting not from himself, but from another, and that other, a woman, of whom it might be supposed in the world, that he had taken advantage. But above all, he felt that the time might come, and come soon, when another of still more consequence might appear upon the scene, clothed with an authority which

would supersede him in a moment, throw all his hope into shade, and crush alike his ambition, and his love.

These thoughts re-assured him, and the spirit of independence resumed its empire. It might be jealousy, but if it was so, it was a

> "Jealousy
> Which sometimes savours nobly;"

and could the mind of Constance herself have beheld the struggle of his, it would assuredly have approved the determination which had so distressed her. How to explain it was the difficulty. Yet he felt that explanation was necessary, or that he might be set down as cold, or even sullenly indifferent to the interest of the person whom he so loved at that moment, that, had it been required, he could have died for her. He attempted to take her hand, which did not seem as if it would be refused, for the feeling of Constance was not that of resentment. But here again he checked himself. At length he exclaimed, "I know not what has come over me, but I feel far from being my own master, and least of all can I explain to you, my cousin, my motives for a conduct, which yet, left unexplained, must make you judge ill of me.

And yet," continued he, hesitatingly, "I think you too noble in nature to do this. You will assuredly require more proof than mere appearance, before you condemn me."

Lady Constance answered not a word.

"I think, I say," proceeded De Vere, with increasing agitation, "my cousin is too just to suppose I would decline what is so honourable to myself, and what might be even thought a duty to her as the head of my mother's house—" But he stopped again, and Constance, thoroughly surprised, and in some little alarm, asked him if he was ill.

"Too ill in mind," answered he, "to make known to you half my feeling upon this subject. But you will think me proud, (as you have sometimes done before) if I tell you what fetters me: and pride towards you, dear Constance, must vanish in the proudest."

"And yet, cousin Mortimer," said Constance, gravely, "this does not appear; if, after all, your refusal of what my guardian has thought it right to ask of you, proceeds from this wayward feeling."

"I explain myself ill," answered he, "and am distressed that you should think so; for, could I hazard my sentiments, you would not

yourself disapprove them. They are even such as I am sure you would yourself entertain, were our situations reversed. I cannot, therefore, doubt their propriety."

Constance felt pleased with the delicacy of this insinuation, though it only made her more interested to know his reasons; and as she was frankness itself, she did not hesitate to tell him so.

"Frankly, then," said he, "they are merely founded in a common prudence, unwilling to encourage hopes which must, from their very nature, be disappointed."

"Hopes! my cousin!" exclaimed Constance, and a faint blush came over her, while looking at him to discover his meaning.

"'Twas a wrong word," cried he, in a hurry of anxiety; "one that belongs not to the subject: and I ask ten thousand pardons of myself, as well as of you, for having used it."

Here he strode several paces along the room, apparently to recover himself. His cousin viewed him still with wonder, and was evidently disconcerted, yet checked her wish to escape from a situation which, from she knew not what causes, had become so unexpectedly trying.

Meantime, De Vere having resumed a collected

air, approached her once more, and with some solemnity, continued thus:

"What I mean, is this: to be entrusted by the heiress of Mowbray with the management of her political influence, could only do me honour; while to be looked upon in my own person as the representative and adviser of my delightful relation, would give a charm to my life which would really ennoble it. To act in such a service would render the service of my country a thousand times more sweet; but to do justice to this proud situation, would require that which I do not possess. It implies an equality, a freedom from controul, a consciousness of power derived from one's self alone, which would not be mine. But I own, it would require other and more important securities, which it is not only impossible for my cousin to give, but which it would be dishonourable in myself to think of, and against which, therefore, it would be my most imperative duty to take no precaution."

Constance looking more and more surprised, he went on, "My meaning is, that the authorised rights of another might, and no doubt *would*, soon put an end to mere delegated power."

Constance, who had hitherto listened with the deepest attention, and seemingly not displeased, here hastily interrupted him. "Nay, now, cousin Mortimer," said she, "I cannot let you go on. While you described your feelings upon our actual situation, I could not refuse to listen; but to glance at things which exist not even in thought, and probably never will exist."

"Never will exist!" interrupted De Vere, in his turn. "Ah! Lady Constance, do not do either the world or yourself such injustice. As to yourself, who that ever saw you—but no, I will not affront that modesty which, present or absent, it has always been my delight to think of, by telling you to your face how little you are to be withstood. Then, as to the world; superior as my cousin is, let us not suppose that the sweetest lot of humanity, the exercise of mutual affection, designed by Providence for the lowest of its creatures, is to be granted to all, yet denied to her. The very thought is an impossibility."

He said this firmly, as if he gathered strength from the very act of explaining his principles. Nor did the blushes or emotion of Constance which, from whatever cause, had become very visible, prevent his finishing; for while she

continued to listen with almost burning attention, he thus proceeded:

"All these things being clear, what, dear Constance, could I expect by becoming the *temporary* representative of your political power, but to be thought a dependant *employé*, the mere holder of a vacancy for one more worthy and assuredly more happy, to fill. Forgive me, therefore, if I feel myself both too humble and too proud for what Lord Clanellan has had the kindness to advise; too humble, because I am far too much removed from you in situation to pretend to that equality, to dream of those rights which would render this office noble; too proud, because, with all this distance, I am too near you in mind to submit to exercise a fleeting power, which might instantly be made by another to fade and vanish before his happier fortune."

The emotions of De Vere when he came to these allusions, were, with all his firmness, but ill concealed. His voice faltered, and his features underwent change; and not the less because, at the instant, something told him that he had weakly suffered himself to be surprised into confessions which it had always been his greatest anxiety to smother.

On her part, the interest which all this inspired in the heart of Constance, was intense. His suppositions called up notions which were not the less active and influential from being vague and indefinite. Like shadows of imagination, which sometimes cause even greater apprehensions, from being indistinctly seen, they filled her with an uneasiness as to the future, which was the more felt from the uncertainty that hung over it. At the same time, the emotion of Mortimer could not escape her. Her ear was fixed in the act of listening, her heart was affected with she knew not what tumultuousness: and she covered her face with her hands, from the fear that it might be disclosing indications of she knew not what feelings. A silence which ensued, was a relief, in some measure, to both.

Yet even this was distressing; for a theme had been started which neither could discuss, and yet neither of them leave without embarrassment. Of the two, however, De Vere was the least cast down; for he was supported by the excitement which a determination to do right, at the expence of inclination, will always produce. While she, to whom all was new, all different, (ah, how different!) from what had been ex-

pected, was left to collect scattered ideas and shaken feelings, the very nature of which she did not well comprehend. All that she was certain of was, that Mortimer seemed more than ever that superior and delicate minded, though perhaps proud being, she had always thought him. As such, she looked at him with a meaning and a sincerity which a vainer man might have mistaken, but which, though it riveted her charms more firmly than before, inspired him with no other feeling than a consciousness (very sweet to him,) that he had deserved her esteem.

Lord Clanellan's return put an end to the interview; but we may confess that from that time forth De Vere became more than ever the study and prevailing source of interest of his charming cousin.

CHAPTER V.

AN EVENT.

So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,
That I would set my life on any chance
To mend it, or be rid on't.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHILE this memorable discussion had been going forward at Castle Mowbray, much interest had been excited in town, as to the determination of Lady Constance in regard to the vacancy that had occurred in Parliament. Lord Oldcastle was surprised, and Lord Cleveland angry at the liberal proceeding of the marquess, a surprise and an anger with which the marquess himself was any thing but moved. Lord Oldcastle observed that the marquess knew not how to act with a party, which Lord Clanellan owned was true; and Lord Cleveland asserted that his support was not worth having. To both of which propositions the marquess himself assented,

and to the latter in particular, because, as he said, his support was only given while deserved, and was, therefore, no favour.

The keen fears of Clayton, which had lately been sharpened by many untowardnesses, reported upon this as symptomatic. Lord Oldcastle disliked, Lord Cleveland defied it. But when the latter found that the Mowbray seat had been offered to De Vere, and by his advice had been actually conferred on one of Mr. Wentworth's determined friends, the secret anger which he had cherished against Constance, and which his secret love had never been able to quell, determined him more than ever on revenge. His heart, indeed, had long been the seat of tumult and vexation in regard to this lady, which had been any thing but assuaged by the asserted injustice of her father's will.

Lord Cleveland exhibited just now a picture of human nature which the moralist who judges the world, and the candidate who courts it, would do well to examine. With the ball apparently at his foot, perhaps there was not habitually a more unhappy man. Three great passions absorbed him, ambition, desire of wealth, and love. All had been defeated. Soured, disappointed, baffled, and mortified, his temper,

(never the best,) was ruined; and, spite of the good breeding which he could sometimes assume, he shewed that it was so. He envied every whistling cottager he passed in a ride, and began to hate the court, but hated Lord Clanellan more for appearing there, and wanting nothing. There was an odious placidity, he said, about both him and his wife, which marked them for vulgar, common-place people.

There is no saying to what a pitch this would have extended, or with what event he would have closed his exhausted career, when a circumstance arose which excited him anew, and held out strong temptations to his strong passion of avarice, as well as to another, (not a weak one with him,) the desire of revenge.

His expectations of succeeding to the Cleveland part of the Mowbray fortune, was, as has been observed, no secret, any more than his resentment at having been disappointed in a more tender object. While in the very act of brooding over these matters, he was surprised by a note, intimating, that if he would meet the writer alone in Kensington Gardens, at a given hour, he should, *upon certain conditions*, be put in possession of information which might prove of immense consequence to his pretensions to the

estates which had been withheld from him, and either pave the way to success with a lady he was known to admire, or gratify the revenge he was known to covet.

The pride of the noble lord was outraged to distraction by this note, which in the round set terms we have given, was anonymous. At first he suspected trick, and was galled at the presumption, which could dare to take such a liberty.

"Am I the sport of the world?" said he, in agitation, "and have I had so little command over myself?"

He read the note again, and perceiving it was in a sort of clerk's hand, too regular for the easy carelessness of an equal, became more and more exasperated at the impudent freedom of the address.

At length, however, he began to think that the lower the condition of the writer, the greater the semblance of some real communication, of consequence, as it was said, either to his interest or his revenge. This excited him, and as he was a stranger to fear, he resolved to keep the appointment. Putting, therefore, a pair of pistols into his pocket, he sallied forth at the hour indicated, and was soon at Kensington.

He met various persons whom he examined, but most of whom he rejected. Some were too careless; they ran up and down the mount; the world went light with them. Some were too absorbed with their own thoughts; they were not on the watch for others. Some were reading, and had happier interests.

At length he observed, in a retired part of the garden, a man in a rusty black coat, and still rustier wig, his beard unshaven, and linen marvellously foul, who looked earnestly at him as he passed. There was a scowl in his eye, mingled, however, with bold familiarity, amounting to audacity, which Cleveland did not like. The place was deserted, and the man looked cautiously round him, as if to ascertain that no one was near. The earl instinctively put his hand upon his pistols, which were not so small, but they shewed plainly what they were. The man, wholly undaunted, gave a saucy smile, and fearlessly observed,

"You need not have taken this precaution, my lord, for in me you see only a friend."

"And pray," said the earl, with angry contempt, "who may *such* a friend be; and what his object in this note? for I suppose I see the writer of it."

"You do, my lord," returned the stranger, in the same cool but impudent tone; "and my object, as you may suppose, is to serve myself, in serving you."

"Familiar enough," cried the earl, drawing back; for the man was advancing almost in contact with him.

"I mean not to be disrespectful," returned the stranger, "but frankness is the life and soul of business."

"Then frankly, but respectfully, if you please," replied Lord Cleveland, still holding back, "state what business it is which such a man as you can have to communicate, and what I am to pay for it, for pay I suppose I must."

"You guess but rightly," said the man.

"Know, however," continued Cleveland, "if you are one of those beings, which your appearance bespeaks, who are driven by their necessities to practise upon the credulity of others, not only will you find yourself mistaken, but I have at hand the means of punishing you."

The stranger looked as it were instinctively round; then, seeing no one near, gave a smile of contempt, which, from one of his squalid appearance, astonished Lord Cleveland, not less than what followed.

"Your threat, my lord," said he, "is useless, for I am one who care too little for life, or even liberty, which is so much better, to fear any thing. But make yourself easy as to my purpose. In a word, the communications I have to make, will give you a title to the Cleveland part of the Mowbray estates, and my price preliminarily is fifty guineas."

"Preliminarily!"

"Yes! for without that, this important deed," taking a parchment from under his coat, "which, upon my honour, is authentic—"

"Honour!" cried Lord Cleveland, whose pride and disgust, heightened by the terms proposed, now got the better of him.

The man immediately put the deed in his pocket, and a scowl came over him which was quite terrific. At length, recovering his tone, he almost haughtily said,

"Your lordship is the best judge of your own affairs, as I am of mine."

"Your affairs!" murmured the earl, in a suppressed but indignant tone.

"Yes, my lord; I suppose I am a man as well as your lordship, and have affairs perhaps as pressing. In a word, I am able to assist your wishes, and I am able too to refuse that assist-

ance, unless I am paid for it. If you did not suppose I had some such power, why did you meet me?"

The earl bit his lip. He felt that the man had, at least, some reason on his side; but, from his manners, and sordid figure, was angry that he should have exposed himself to a situation to be thus addressed. But he was also divided between his pride and his interest, and only hesitated from the doubts which so mean an appearance raised, as to the possibility of making good these assertions.

The stranger, perhaps, saw this, for, with cool effrontery, and after looking at his own dress, he observed,

"I see what is passing in your lordship's mind; but if I were, what perhaps you take me for, how much easier would another course have been! If I wanted merely the sum I have asked, we are here by ourselves, and you are so far right in the difference you put between us, that, I agree with you, it would be a most suspicious circumstance for the great Earl of Cleveland to be found alone in such a place, with such a wretch. What offers, therefore, against my honesty, might I not accuse you of?"

"Rascal!" cried Lord Cleveland, both exas-

perated and alarmed. "Move off: I have trusted myself too long with you."

So saying, he fairly pulled out one of his pistols and cocked it. The stranger, though still unmoved, and shewing a coolness which the peer himself could not help admiring, took from his pocket a pistol on his part; but he also reproduced his parchment, and unfolding it, so as evidently to exhibit a legal instrument, observed, "You see I am armed as well as your lordship, should you proceed to violence. But this is the weapon I would rather oppose to your's. It is the actual deed of settlement made by your grand-uncle, John Cleveland, on his daughter, Lady Mowbray. To know its contents is surely worth what I ask; but to possess it, and if success attend it, (which I *professionally* predict it will,) your lordship must come down more largely. As to the success, however, I am willing to argue on the principle of no cure, no pay."

Lord Cleveland having partly recovered from his anger, occasioned by the freedom and vulgarity of the man, began now to ponder upon the proposal. At length he accepted it, and instantly paid the money. The stranger, upon receiving it, said his name was Silverlock, an

attorney, who, as he stated, had left off business, but which business, as it rather seemed, had left off him. He had formerly been employed under the solicitors of Lord Mowbray, and evidently (though he refused all account of it) must have robbed them of this important deed, which had been searched for in vain for years, though the loss had been kept secret.

Lord Cleveland, more and more startled at the infamy of the man, conceived the design of arresting him on the spot, but postponed it for the purpose of extracting more information from him. Being asked, therefore, for what purpose he had secreted this document so long ago, Silverlock fairly avowed it was because he thought a time might come when he might turn it to account, should his necessities require it, "as," added he, "they certainly do now."

"It seems then, by your own account," said Lord Cleveland, "that you are a rogue?"

"No more," answered Silverlock, "than many who think themselves, and are believed to be my betters."

"It should seem, too, however," said the earl, surveying his figure again, "that you have not yet succeeded by your roguery."

"That is neither here nor there," replied

Silverlock, with coolness. "I may have had passions to gratify as well as your lordship; though in prudence I own you have the advantage of me."

The earl cursed him in his heart, for this insolent tone of equality, and then himself, for having given him the sort of right he seemed to feel, to assume it. But he was fain to swallow his vexation, in his anxiety to pursue the inquiry.

Retiring, therefore, to one of the alcoves, he read and pondered the instrument which Silverlock had produced to him; on which, however, he observed that the broken lawyer kept a ferocious eye, while he continued to clutch a corner of it with his hand, during the whole time Lord Cleveland was employed upon it.

But whatever his future purpose in regard to Silverlock, his lordship was far from comfortable with himself. For he had admitted a scoundrel, and that of the lowest kind, in some measure to his confidence; nor can we pity the indications of fear and shame which he exhibited, lest he should be discovered in the disgraceful *tête à tête*, to which he had condescended.

He hurried over the deed in tremulous anxiety, at intervals looking out to observe if any

of his acquaintance might be approaching; so that he was by no means in a condition to make himself fully master of the document. Meanwhile, his companion, who seemed to be a compound of selfishness and misanthropy, enjoyed his embarrassment, and seeing how much the equality of manner he had assumed, annoyed the earl, triumphed as it were, in making him feel it.

"Never fear, my lord," he cried; "you may spoil all by being ashamed of me. We are embarked you see in the same cause."

Lord Cleveland's eyes flashed anger, but Silverlock went on:

"You will not be able to comprehend what I have obliged you with, if you let this shame interfere with your powers of apprehension. You had better read the whole of the deed over again; and as you seem not to relish it here, I would propose having the honour of waiting upon you at Cleveland House."

"Never!" cried the earl, absolutely shuddering with scorn, which called up almost as much scorn from Silverlock. At length, however, though irritated beyond all patience, and still determined to bring the villain to justice, yet as

far as concerned himself, unwilling to lose the benefit of his treachery, Cleveland observed—

"You say right. To be seen with so consummate a scoundrel, must preclude all power of deliberation. As I have purchased you, I must see you again, but not at Cleveland House. Meet me, therefore, to-morrow, and bring the deed with you to my solicitors."

"Stop, my lord," said the unabashed Silverlock; "whether I am a scoundrel for endeavouring to relieve my own necessities by making use of your's, may or may not be true, but you have not yet purchased me. I sold you the *sight* of this deed, which you are at liberty again to peruse, here, but no where else. Or if nothing will satisfy you but possession, a shorter way by far presents itself on the spot, by which the deed may be instantly your's."

"Be brief, Sir," replied Cleveland, stifling a fit of passion; "and let me know the full price of your iniquity."

"I thank you, my lord," returned Silverlock, "and I think I am but moderate if I propose, for a check on your bankers for 500*l.*, to deliver that to you, which may put you in possession of ten thousand a year."

Cleveland was startled; but as the other re-

fused to relax an inch, or to attend him again, unless he complied, he found that his design of arresting him was probably suspected, and would be frustrated, unless he executed it himself. This he had resolution enough to have attempted, notwithstanding the desperation of the party; but he was embarrassed by fears for the deed, and the probable loss of all the advantages which had appeared, however obscurely, in view. As, therefore, there was no time for deliberation, he decided at all events upon getting possession of so important a document; encouraging himself on the instant, with the consolatory notion, that he might contrive other means for bringing the villain to justice. Silverlock knew quite enough of human nature, to perceive that he had conquered; and Lord Cleveland murmuring something of wanting means to draw the check in that place, and the expediency therefore of their meeting in town; the difficulty was avoided, as if it had been foreseen, by the attorney's pulling out an inkhorn and paper, and presenting it to Lord Cleveland.

"One thing more, however," added he, "is wanting to this bargain. Your lordship must give me your honour, that you will not return

to town, until I have had time to receive the check, and, moreover, that you will make no search for me afterwards. Without this, I am off the contract."

"Contract!" exclaimed the earl, with a mixed sensation of contempt for his companion, and dissatisfaction with his own conduct.

Silverlock was not wanting in a look of hatred on his part; but he waited with a curl of his lip, as if in subdued resentment, until the peer should decide.

"And how," said Lord Cleveland, after ruminating a few moments, "if your future services should be wanting in proving this deed, or towards any suit that I may bring upon it?"

"My lord," replied Silverlock, "I am ready to trust *you*, for your interest is concerned in it."

Lord Cleveland again felt uneasy, while Silverlock proceeded:

"I say I am ready to trust that *you*, my lord, will take no proceedings against me, at least until you have thoroughly ascertained the value of this document. But others may, whose interest lies the other way; and you will excuse me, therefore, for not revealing the place

of my abode. But let your pride think what it please of me, I scorn to take your money, for an unavailing service. Should you, therefore, hereafter want explanations in regard to the deed you are about to purchase, I promise to be forthcoming (as far at least, as may be necessary to perfect my assistance), on an application to this address."

So saying, he pulled out a dirty card, with a reference to some man in Lyon's-Inn; and perceiving the earl to be too much disgusted even to touch it, a storm of resentment in his turn gathered on his brow. For the peer, nothing was now left. He took down the address in his pocket-book, signed the check which put him in possession of the precious deed, and fled from Kensington as he would from the plague.

Let not the details of this scene be thought too minute. They afford a lesson to the proudest, on the power of a vicious appetency to break down the strongest bulwarks of pride. These often stand in the place of virtue, and it is grievous to see them fall, through self-interest, at the foot of vulgar insolence and sordid crime. It is not without its use, therefore, to shew how bad passions may level all distinction, and how

near, in consequence, the toe of the peasant may come to the heel of the courtier. In this instance, it must be confessed, the kibe of Lord Cleveland was cruelly galled.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CERTAINTIES OF LAW.

> Between two girls, which hath the merriest eye,
> I have perhaps some shallow spirit of judgment;
> But in these nice sharp quillets of the law,
> Good faith, I am no wiser than a daw.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

THOUGH restored to self-consequence, in the grandeur of his house, and the obsequiousness of his domestics, Lord Cleveland could not immediately recover his self-possession. His pride had been severely wounded by the intercourse which he had permitted himself to hold with not merely a villain, but one seemingly of the dregs of mankind; nor had the result of that intercourse been such as to satisfy his better feelings. On the contrary, locked in his closet, and any thing but easy in regard to the line of conduct he had pursued, he passed a self-examination by no means pleasant to his self-love.

It could not be wrong, indeed, to seek for

the proof of rights, of which he might have unjustly been deprived; but it could not be right, he thought, to connive with a robber in order to obtain them.

He pursued this train till his thoughts became as unsatisfactory as they were tumultuous. A confused notion haunted him that he might himself be deemed a larcener, or at best a receiver of the fruits of larceny; nor was his shame lessened by the feeling that all this had been incurred with a view to attack the fortune of a kinswoman, and that kinswoman an orphan girl. Under these impressions, the insignia of a high order which belonged to him, and which lay on the table before him, caught his eye. He shuddered, and murmured something about a stain to knighthood.

Nor was Lord Cleveland insincere in this. We have painted him alive to the theory of virtue, and though too frequently departing from it, never doing so without something like remorse, or at least self-blame. No man, besides, understood the value of reputation better, or indeed wished it more, for its own sake; and his mind was naturally so lofty, that the only wonder was that he ever could be mean.

In the present instance, all this was enhanced

by the disgusts which he had undergone, from having forced himself to put up with the vulgar insolence of a low-bred villain. And it must be owned, if villainy always appeared in such a shape, few would be in love with it.

Altogether the Earl of Cleveland was any thing but happy at his morning's work; nor was he disposed to examine his dearly-bought instrument with that immediate devouring attention which might have been expected, considering its importance, and the means he had taken to acquire it. A happy thought at length came across him, in which, to do him justice, he was perfectly sincere. He resolved to restore the deed to the Mowbray family, as soon as he had availed himself of its contents; which, considering how interested he was, he conceived he had a perfect right to do.

His bell at length rang—Mr. Graves, his solicitor, was sent for to attend him instantly; and meantime he sat down to ponder the contents of his acquisition.

What immediately, and most struck him, was the inartificial manner, or rather the total want of technicality, in which the instrument was drawn. For, strange as it may appear, it was prepared by old Mr. Cleveland himself, assisted

only by a very ignorant village attorney, who had engrossed it, and who was named as sole trustee to the uses of the settlement. To account for this, it ought to be explained that this Mr. Cleveland was a miser, a humourist, and a self-opinionated man, who had scarcely ever stirred from the remote district in Yorkshire from which he derived his name. He was skilled in mortgages; by which, added to dabbling in the South Sea, but chiefly an undeviating parsimony for full forty years, he had amassed immense wealth. His vanity, as well as his avarice, had combined to satisfy him that the deed, which he and his country lawyer and friend had prepared, was sufficiently binding for all the purposes (important as they were) for which he had concocted it.

His only child, a daughter, was married to William Earl of Mowbray (father of the last), with his entire approbation; the more particularly, because her husband had consented to take her without a fortune, on the solemn promise that she should be made heiress to all her father's real estates; which promise, however, had no legal binding, and was trusted entirely to the old man's family pride, of which he possessed a great share.

Nor was Lord Mowbray deceived in his expectations: for Mr. Cleveland amused himself during almost all the rest of his life, with drawing up various deeds of settlement, all ending in this last, which had so strangely got into Lord Cleveland's possession; and as it was universally known that Lord and Lady Mowbray were the promised and designed heirs, they quietly succeeded; while all the personal property to an immense amount, save ten thousand pounds to Lady Mowbray, was bequeathed by will to the then Earl of Cleveland, nephew of the testator, and father of the present Earl.

The following are the passages in the deed, which, however ambiguous the phraseology, were reasoned upon by Silverlock in an accompanying paper, as favourable to Lord Cleveland's pretensions.

"Whereas," says the deed, "the said John Cleveland has already, by his will, disposed of all his personal property to a large amount, (forty thousand pounds,) in favour of his nephew, Charles, Earl of Cleveland, meaning to settle his real estates upon the descendants of his only daughter, Maria, Countess of Mowbray, who, with her husband, Henry, Earl of Mowbray, are both now deceased, leaving, as their only

heirs, William, present Earl of Mowbray, and the Lady Eleanor De Vere, wife of Colonel De Vere; but if they fail of having issue, it is his intention that the said estates shall return to the name of Cleveland, in the head of the family then alive; NOW THE SAID John Cleveland conveys all the said real estates to Philip Dowlas, gentleman, in trust for himself, John Cleveland, for life, and afterwards to the use of his said grandson, William, Earl of Mowbray, and his heirs *male*, failing which William and his *heirs*, to the heirs *male* of his said grand daughter, the Lady Eleanor De Vere. BUT if the title of Mowbray become extinct, then the said estates are to go to the then existing Earl of Cleveland, of the blood and family of the said John Cleveland who may be alive at the time when the title of Mowbray so fails, to be held by him in *tail male*, and failing the *heirs* of his said grandchild, William, Earl of Mowbray, if there should be female descendants of the said John Cleveland left, when the said estates pass to the heir male as aforesaid; then the said estates shall be charged with twenty thousand pounds, as a provision for such female descendants, share and share alike."

Such was the loose composition of this re-

markable settlement, and considering its immense importance, in the disposition of the real property of the settler, it is extraordinary how little it had ever been known to the parties most affected by its provisions. As to the Lord Cleveland alive at the time of his uncle's decease, having been constituted legatee of the personal property, which as much surprised as it contented him, and having always understood that the real property was settled, as was natural, upon the grandchild or children of the deceased, the last Lord Mowbray was suffered to succeed without inquiry into any thing farther, the will commencing with a "Whereas, all my real estates are already settled on my grand-children, by my daughter, Maria." Then, as to Colonel De Vere, being almost always abroad, he had as little opportunity as disposition to sift into remote contingencies, satisfied by Mr. Dowlas, the trustee (who had instantly become the managing lawyer of Lord Mowbray), that his children were in the entail, after the *heirs* of that lord should fail. Under these circumstances of ignorance or indifference, the deed itself was stolen by the honest Mr. Silverlock, which precluded all further knowledge; and Lady Constance being left sole inheritrix, under

the will of her father, who had succeeded, as of course, by an understood deed of settlement, (though the understanding was merely general) there never had been a contemplation, either by the Clevelands or the De Veres, that her title could be contested.

But the deed being now forthcoming, its provisions admitted of a very different interpretation, according to the situation of the different parties. "It is clear," said the reasoning of Silverlock, "first, that Lady Constance, being a female, could not take what was to go to an heir male, whoever that might be; next, from the express mention that the Earl of Cleveland should succeed, in the event of the title of Mowbray becoming extinct, and the estates continuing in *tail male* when they come to him or his family, it is clear that the heir male meant, can only be the present earl."

And to this opinion *inclined* Mr. Graves, when he arrived, and had perused the deed. This was an extremely cautious gentleman, (if he might not be called timid) but who by the help of a sleek clean skin, plain dress, and supple manners, had acquired and preserved considerable business, with the reputation of never plunging his clients into danger. We say *in-*

clined to this opinion, because he had never been known to give a positive one in his life; and we would not wish to hurt his reputation in this instance, by asserting that he had departed from his usual practice. Lord Cleveland, it was said, employed him, because, while he always formed his own opinions, he was willing that their decision should be tempered by the other's caution. In the case before us, an instance of the propriety of this occurred; for no sooner was the history of the deed unfolded, than Mr. Graves blessed himself a thousand times, and besought his lordship to have nothing more to do with it. Lord Cleveland looking astonishment, the prudent Graves assured him that he was on the brink of a precipice, for that what he had done amounted to a compounding of felony, which was almost as great a crime in law, as a *præmunire* itself.

The earl, to his consternation, told Mr. Graves that he would run the risk; but added, that, as soon as he had derived such benefit as he felt he had a right to reap from the deed, he meant to restore it to the Mowbrays. The prudent solicitor here turned his prudence to the other side, and besought his patron against this, in his most earnest mnnner, as such a proceeding,

he said, might ruin the whole case. Upon the case itself, however, Mr. Graves could not be brought to any opinion which might be termed explicit, except his very full and free agreement with his noble client, that it was a question very well worth trying.

The opinion of a very eminent conveyancer was now taken, who said there was a sea of uncertainty hanging about the words "*heirs male*," and "*heirs*," or "*failing the heirs*," which were contradictory; as "*heirs*," and "failing the *heirs*," might mean heirs general, which would certainly include Lady Constance. But there is also, added the opinion, a direct contradiction between the two positive enacting clauses, by which, on the extinction of the title of Mowbray, the estates shall go to Lord Cleveland; yet, on the failure of Lord Mowbray and his heirs, (in which the extinction of the title is included) they are to go to the heir male of Lady Eleanor. This is so irreconcilable that it will probably vitiate the whole deed, and then Lady Constance will take as heir-at-law.

This was too far from satisfactory for Lord Cleveland to be content with it: and, accordingly, another opinion, from another conveyancer, equally eminent, was taken, who said that

though the words "*heirs*" and "*failing the heirs*," if left unexplained, would certainly include Lady Constance, yet there were abundant explanatory passages to oust her, and particularly the clause by which, on the extinction of the title of Mowbray, the estates should pass to the Cleveland family, and, emphatically, the provision of money for female descendants.

So far so good; but the opinion went on to say that these last clauses were wholly contradicted by the preamble, which might possibly let in the descendants generally of Maria, Countess of Mowbray; and then the contest would lie between Lady Constance and Lady Eleanor, or Mr. De Vere.

The last opinion was wormwood to the feelings of Lord Cleveland, as, not only was it adverse to his own claim, but set up that of another family, whose success, of all persons in the world, he least thought of, and most deprecated.

A third opinion was therefore taken, which crowned all his wishes.

"For though," said the sage, "it were doubtful (which it is not,) whether Lord Cleveland or Lady Constance should take; if there is one thing more certain than another, it is that

none of the other descendants of Maria, Countess of Mowbray, can take. For, however it may be in wills, nothing can be more clear than the rule of law as to deeds, that the most definite statement of the party's *intentions* in a *preamble* shall go for nothing, in opposition to a known technical form, (bearing one, and one only meaning) or a plain unambiguous provision, such as that upon the extinction of the title of Mowbray, the estates shall go to the existing Earl of Cleveland, in *tail male*."

As for Lady Constance's claim, the oracle asserted that it was not worthy consideration, females being ousted in express terms; and Mr. De Vere's was equally defenceless, as, though heir male to Lady Eleanor, Lady Eleanor herself had no claim; and that whole branch, therefore, could only come in under the implication of the preamble, which, as has been stated, can never stand against a positive, known, and technical form of conveyance.

Fortified by such a preponderance of opinion against the rights of Lady Constance, and the De Vere claim being too shadowy to think of, Lord Cleveland was resolved to take the field. But first he wished to disburthen himself of what, to do him justice, weighed heavily, if not

upon his virtue, at least upon his fears for his reputation, namely, the treaty with the villain Silverlock. For this purpose he wrote a letter to Lord Clanellan in his quality of guardian, in which he fairly enough stated the transaction, which, as he observed, had been thrust suddenly and unexpectedly upon him.

"Finding myself, however," said the letter, "as irrevocably as unaccountedly plunged in an interview with a scoundrel, it was not easy for me to extricate myself, nor, for your sakes, any more than my own, to make an inactive retreat, and leave a document of such immense importance to one or other of us, in his possession. I trust your lordship will agree with me, that it was of far more consequence for the rightful owner to repossess himself of this deed, than, by conniving at the crime by which it had come to his possession, to let one wretch more loose upon the world. My first impulse was, indeed, to arrest him; but not only from his desperation, this might have required more force than I was singly master of, but it might have endangered the entire and perfect possession of the writing. There was no time to plan, and I purchased a document to which I find I have no right, and which I am therefore ready to

deliver to whomever your lordship will appoint, for the proper owner.

"But though I have no right to the parchment, the rights with which its contents invest me, are, I find, incalculable. The law people have given their opinions, some more, some less favourable to me, but all unfavourable to the possession by Lady Constance of that part of her estates which her father derived from my family. Upon this it is most necessary that I consult your lordship; and as it involves a question of still greater and dearer consequence to me than the estates themselves, I request of your complaisance that you will give me a meeting upon it before you communicate the contents of this packet to any human being."

And what was it that was of greater and dearer consequence to Lord Cleveland than the estates themselves? Is it possible that this worn out son of the world could still continue to love a person who had so repeatedly, we will not say disdained, but declined his affection? Could the natural reaction of the heart be so different in him from all others, that he could still love, spite of what he thought ill-usage, spite of anger, of thirst of revenge, and even of hopelessness itself?

It was even so; though were we to analyze this wayward heart correctly, we might find nothing really unnatural in these feelings. That a man may be refused, be angry, and desire revenge, and yet feel his breast filled with the object who has occasioned all this, is of every day's occurrence. Whether what he may feel be true tenderness, or only an uneasiness under slight, which nothing can effectually cure but success in the end, may be made a question. Yet, while the uneasiness continue, it may pass for love, with the world, and even with the patient himself. But can he feel thus, and yet be really hopeless? We ask, on our parts, hopeless of what? If of inspiring real tenderness, which he perhaps cares not for, and possibly himself never felt, we say, yes! If of producing *some* change, of sacrificing to vanity, or of finally conquering whatever it was his object to conquer—we say no. When hopes, even such as these, are thoroughly abandoned, so is the pursuit.

Now, mark the application! Was Lord Cleveland capable of real love? that love which almost worships its object, and is the delight of a pure and delicate heart? In an earlier time we might be disposed to answer in the affirma-

tive. The character and disposition of Constance had certainly moved him more than ever he had been moved before, and had he succeeded, his mind would have enjoyed the only chance it had of recovering its long-lost tone. But, as it was, that could not be. His desperation had banished those purer notions about her which had gleamed, though faintly, in his memorable conversation at Castle Mowbray with De Vere.* They were now like images that move us in a light sleep, too indistinct to be embodied, too fleeting to be remembered. No; there was yet passion, but no purity in the love of Lord Cleveland. What, then, so excited, what so enchained him, as to give an air of constancy to his affection, which rather raised than hurt him in the world? Let him who knows that world, answer; Vanity! Pride! the pride of conquering difficulties; a natural ardour and haughtiness wounded to the quick. All these would find consolation from success, in the end, quite sufficient to keep up the pursuit, though love had never been felt, or had changed (which it had not) into absolute disgust.

This, therefore, must explain, what we own

* See Vol. II. Ch. 1.

requires explanation, the phenomenon, as it may be called, which closed the end of the letter to Lord Clanellan. For Lord Cleveland, from some or all of these causes, had never been able to banish Constance entirely from his mind; and he had conceived fresh hopes, from the important acquisition he had recently made.

He at least thought he had found an opportunity of appearing in a new character, for generosity and disinterestedness, by the use he intended to make of it; or, if that should fail, it still remained an engine of terror, and, at worst, of vengeance. How all this was developed, how conducted, the changes it produced, and how it ended, remains to be seen.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MISTAKES OF PRIDE.

Nay, if the gentle spirit of moving words
Can no way change you to a milder form,
I'll woo you like a soldier—at arm's end.

SHAKSPEARE.

UPON the receipt of Lord Cleveland's letter, Lord Clanellan, who had returned from Castle Mowbray, gave him the choice of the next six hours for the interview he had solicited. They met, and the first subject discussed, ended in all the satisfaction to the earl which he could have hoped: for as he had not felt obliged to state to the marquess the different hopes and wishes he had entertained in meeting Silverlock, or the exact views for himself which had afterwards prompted the purchase of the deed, Lord Clanellan, in the most unqualified manner, acquitted him of having tampered with a robber.

"Whether you were right," said he, "in

meeting this villain without greater precaution, may be a question of prudence, but not of morality; and, having met him, I know not that you could have done otherwise. But your offer to restore the document to its true owner, stamps the whole transaction with honour."

Lord Cleveland bowed, and waited with some interest for the marquess to proceed.

"As to the consequences of this important *discovery*, as your lordship calls it; of a document which we must be permitted to assert no one ever attempted to conceal, there can be but one feeling," said Lord Clanellan, "on the part of Lady Constance—namely, that justice should be done, and the law take its course."

"Spoken like yourself," replied Lord Cleveland; "yet the stake is immense. Full ten thousand a year, and possibly the arrears!"

"Were it an hundred instead of ten," returned Lord Clanellan, "I should give the same answer."

"And would you do nothing, recommend nothing, catch at nothing," said Lord Cleveland, "for your ward to avoid so immense a loss?"

"To catch at any thing," returned the marquess, "implies something at least not becoming, and therefore, not worthy your admirable kins-

woman. But I would do every thing, and recommend every thing, not dishonourable, to preserve her from misfortune."

Lord Cleveland's cheek experienced a slight tinge at these words. He felt rebuked, and rebuke was not agreeable to him.

"I should have hoped," said he, proudly, "that I had credit enough with Lord Clanellan, for these words to have been spared."

The marquess assured him he meant not the least allusion, except to his own feelings; and Lord Cleveland proceeded.

"May I hope, then, that any thing I may have to propose, to avoid so great a blow to the interests of Lady Constance, as well as an *éclat* which I know must be unpleasant to her delicate mind, may be viewed with good will, if not with favour?"

"As her guardian," replied the marquess, with politeness, "I am ready to listen as becomes me, to any proposal which Lord Cleveland may think it right to make."

"But you are cold, marquess," returned Lord Cleveland, "and my proposals are not to be thrown away upon an unwilling heart. They emanate from feelings which ought at least to be

respected, and I go not a step until I am assured that I am willingly heard."

"If this mean," replied the marquess, "any thing in the shape of menace——"

"The farthest in the world from it," interrupted Cleveland, alarmed at his own haste, "and you must forgive any thing that may appear abrupt from one, whose feeling is at this moment too anxious to be conveyed in terms very measured."

The marquess looked surprised, and Cleveland went on.

"Know then that you see before you a man who, with all the efforts he has made to conquer himself, is still the lover of your admirable ward. She has resisted my advances more than once; and I know well what would be required of me by pride. But though I am not deficient in that respect," (and he forced a smile, which called up a real one in his hearer), "I own that I can feel none towards so gentle a creature."

"Your lordship but properly appreciates her," said Lord Clanellan, somewhat softening towards him.

The earl then proceeded to explain all his wishes, which, never suppressed, had rekindled

he said, upon the prospects which, what he still called his discovery, had opened.

"I felt," said the earl, "all the advantages it gave me, but——"

"You must give me leave to stop you," cried the marquess, interrupting him; "I know of no advantage you can have derived from your new situation, over the pure and disinterested being whom you seek, even were all your supposed claims already confirmed. But I need not point out to you that we acknowledge no claims, nor even know of any that can affect our commonest interests, much less influence a heart, which you have yourself described as delicate."

"I confess myself wrong," said the earl, with a vexed air, "and acknowledge you have reason in what you say. I had better, therefore, come at once to the point, which is, that I had far rather owe what may devolve upon me, to Lady Constance's own bounty, by giving me her hand, than to any decision of the law, even supposing it were now ready to be pronounced."

"I am to understand then," said the marquess, "that you still love Lady Constance; and that, provided your hand is accepted, these supposed claims will be suppressed."

"Exactly so, and I desire your frank answer to my proposals."

"Frankly, then, as guardian, I shall think myself bound to lay them before Lady Constance."

"I conclude so. But is that all? Have you no opinion upon my offers? No advice?"

"None in the world."

"And why not?"

"Because not only is it an affair which concerns the lady alone, but I know not the person in the world who could form a better opinion of it than Lady Constance herself."

Lord Cleveland did not like this fencing on the part of Lord Clanellan, and, coming to close quarters, fairly asked his own sentiments upon his chance of success, "for sentiments I suppose you must have," said he.

"If I must give them," answered Lord Clanellan, "you will not be offended, I hope, if I say, I think you will not succeed. Excuse me if I compare your proceedings to the rough addresses of Henry VIII. when he sought Mary of Scotland for his son. He made war, 'and the Scots,' says the historian, 'resisted the more, because they did not like this *rough* way of *wooing*.'"

"Do you blame me, then, for expressing my opinion of my legal rights?"

"By no means: but I blame you for offering to compromise their suppression——"

Lord Cleveland absolutely started at this accusation; a tempest gathered on his brow, while the marquess, not noticing it, coolly went on.

"If I know any thing of Lady Constance, had she no preconceived opinions, nay, if they were in your favour—"

"Which it seems they are not," cried the earl, with petulance—"but go on;" and he folded his arms in a listening posture, but turned away to hide the impression which the marquess's implied supposition had made upon his spirit.

"My lord," answered Lord Clanellan, "let us not hurry one another. The situation you place me in is always a delicate, in this instance, a difficult one. It were easy for me to parry it, by merely saying that your lordship is of far too much consequence for me not to lay your proposals before my ward; and with this I might cease. But you have also pressed me for my own opinion, which, excuse me if I say, you ought not to demand."

Cleveland admired his placidity, yet wished himself under ground for having put his wishes in his power. But he was too far gone to recede, and summoned all his patience while Lord Clanellan resumed.

"I have observed to you, that even if Lady Constance had prejudices in your favour, (of which I know nothing) this novel, and again I will call it rough mode of wooing, would I think determine her against you. If her feelings are against you already——"

"Of which you know something," again interrupted the petulant earl.

"My Lord," said Lord Clanellan, "'tis fit we break off. You must excuse me if I content myself with saying that I shall certainly lay your proposals before Lady Constance, with all the offered advantages, and also the threats, with which they have been accompanied."

"I have used no threats," replied Lord Cleveland, with vehemence, "and I throw myself upon your consideration, not to let my eagerness to succeed prejudice me, as I perceive it will. I therefore intreat you to commend my suit, without the accompaniment of the threat which you think I have held out. Annihilating that word between us, conceive that I have merely

opened to you what I have so lately learned of my claims in law, without the intimation that I mean to enforce them."

"You ask an impossibility," returned Lord Clanellan. "Were I only the friend of Lady Constance, to conceal her danger would be a false tenderness. As her guardian, it would be treason."

"Surely you are too honourable," said Lord Cleveland, "to take advantage of an imprudence which you must perceive has arisen from the anxiety of love alone?"

"I am distressed," answered Lord Clanellan, "but not embarrassed. It is wholly impossible for me, standing in the relation I do to Lady Constance, to keep from her the danger that hangs over her fortune; or, knowing the alternative your lordship holds out, not to acquaint her with the means of avoiding it. If your lordship, however, retract that alternative, and mean me to understand that you withdraw your claims *at all events*, then, and then only, can I think myself released from my duty in this respect. But neither do we expect you to do this, nor could you if you would, nor ought you if you could, consistently with your duty to yourself, or to those who may come after you."

"But I may gratuitously release my right," cried Lord Cleveland; "and I will do so to-morrow, if you will only tell me it will make a favourable impression on this heavenly girl. Say, I beseech you."

"Such generosity could not fail to impress any woman favourably," said the marquess, "and this I may willingly concede. Whether that favourable impression may rise to the height you evidently mean, is a point upon which I am equally bound, as a man of honour, not to hazard an opinion."

"My impatience has destroyed me," exclaimed Lord Cleveland, taking a quick turn in the room; then grasping the marquess's arm, "Lord Clanellan," said he, "though a man of all others perhaps the most practised in the world, you see before you, upon these points, an absolute child. Will you promise, at least, to give me time, and wait till to-morrow before you take any proceeding on this communication?"

Lord Clanellan, really almost pitying his condition, gave the promise required; but stated, that after what had passed, he could not longer keep his ward in ignorance of what so deeply concerned her; and with this the two noblemen parted.

On his way home, the spoiled child of the world gave a loose to his rage, which the cool firmness of Lord Clanellan had forced him to suppress. "I was a fool and a madman," exclaimed he, "to hope to make any impression upon a man who has no passions: an automaton, put into motion by rule and line. Alas! he never knew a sensation of love, any more than of ambition, or the value of money. Cunning, however, withal, for his ward; an excellent guardian; yes! yes! very excellent!" Then pulling out the deed, the moment he got home, he read it, with all the opinions taken upon it, for the tenth time that day; and feeling more than ever confident that the male heir mentioned could only describe himself, he started up with an exclamation, "Release my right! give up ten thousand a year, to be rejected perhaps after all! rejected, as I have been already! Ambition! interest! and revenge forbid!"

So saying, he ordered Clayton and Graves to be sent for; and breaking an engagement to dinner, he shut himself up with them during the rest of the day, torturing the whole English language from every thing that could be construed against his case, until no construction was

left but what confirmed it. The result was, that he felt so confident of success in his cause, that he could not submit to withdraw his claim on the event of an uncertain suit; and he sent a letter in form to Lord Clanellan to that effect, only repeating, that he would still rather derive these estates from Lady Constance herself, than from a decision of a court of law.

CHAPTER VIII.

PRINCIPLE.

I grant I am a woman, but withal
A woman well reputed.

SHAKSPEARE.

EVERY dinner table, and every drawing-room, the court, the city, all London, now rang with the subject of Lord Cleveland's claim on the inheritance of Lady Constance. Politicians forgot the colonies and the continent to discuss it; the shuffling at the whist table was prolonged, in order that the old might talk of it; and the young lost the figure in the dance, in expressing their wonder who would succeed, and in commenting upon the conduct of all the parties concerned. By this latter class, especially the females, Lord Cleveland was universally condemned, for seeking to ruin a young orphan, merely because she could not love him; while

her rejection of him, under such perilous chances, was lauded to the skies. She was a true heroine, a model of delicacy, and greatness of soul. At any rate, she would have Castle Mowbray and the Staffordshire estates left; but then again, what would be her means to support such a place? and what were those means in comparison with former expectations?

Lord Clanellan had, like a correct guardian, laid all the great earl's pretensions before his ward. At the same time, his sense of propriety would not allow him to accompany this with one single moving word. The talk of the claim had already reached her; but wholly unused to business, and in fact almost embarrassed with the cares of her large inheritance, she received the account of the danger that threatened her, without alarm. Had she been told, indeed, that half her fortune was to be actually taken from her, it would scarcely have moved, certainly not made her unhappy. But when Lord Clanellan came down post, to detail the overtures of the earl, no words can express her annoyance. Astonishment, disgust, and resentment, all got the better of her, and for a while she could make no reply. At last she was able to exclaim, "Is it possible I can be thought so

vile? Am I to be bribed into the acceptance of a man whom I not only cannot love, but must ever consider as the destroyer of my father?"

A mingled sorrow and dignity accompanied this exclamation, which was deeply felt by her aunt and Lord Clanellan, who offered every consolation to a spirit evidently wounded. "Dear Constance," said the marquess, "I feared, nay, I knew how this would be, and I believe that duty alone, could impose this task upon me. The same duty, however, if I may not say justice itself, obliges me to add, that under whatever rough appearances, and however you may reject him, I am convinced that Lord Cleveland loves you."

A sort of displeasure, mixed with terror, came over the brow of Constance, at this intimation. It was evident that she disliked his attachment, more than she feared his vengeance. "Am I then," she asked, looking with surprise at Lord Clanellan, "to consider you as his advocate?"

"Never, dear Constance; never would I presume to be the advocate of any one with you; for never could I so much affront your own clear judgment and admirable heart. But there is a debt due to justice, to which the worst people have a right. This paid, I have not a word to

say for Lord Cleveland; and if my advice be asked, I will give it freely."

"You are the same upright man and kind friend I have always found you," returned Constance, "and I will beg you to be the bearer of my answer."

"I am here for that purpose," observed the marquess, "but is it a thing to be decided in a moment? and may not your decision be the safer for proceeding on deliberation?"

"I want no deliberation," replied Constance, "to answer proposals which would be an affront to the meanest of my sex. For even if I could love this gentleman, such conduct as his would destroy all affection, in destroying esteem. But I do not, cannot love him. God knows, if it had been otherwise, I might not now have been the helpless orphan whom he imagines is so much in his power."

Here, the remembrance of her father coming over her, what the danger menaced to her fortune could not produce, her filial tenderness effected in a moment. It was, however, rather a relief than otherwise to give vent to her feelings in tears.

"Tell him," at length, she said, on recovering, "that he knows little of the person——but, no!

degrade me not by explanations. Tell him, if you please, that what my poor father could not induce me to consent to, can never be wrung from me by self-interest or threats. Threats, indeed, I cannot consider them, since, as to these estates, if I have no right to them, he himself cannot be more anxious to recover, than I am willing to restore them."

"Noble girl!" cried Lady Eleanor, throwing herself into the arms of her niece. "My own, own Constance! who but must revere you?"

The marquess was also much moved; for Constance had been like a daughter to him, and he was overpowered to think, that the beautiful playful child, whom in her infancy he had been wont with the marchioness to fondle, had, in so few years, assumed such elevation of character, as, added to her sweetness, made her appear little less than angelic.

These admiring feelings of friends whom she so much loved, affected Constance still more, so that she could not conceal her emotions. Lord Clanellan, however, diverted her from them for the present, by the necessity he felt to explain what had begun to make him uneasy, lest the part he had taken might be misunderstood. Seating himself therefore by her, and

taking one of her hands, "If I could tell you," said he, "how much I admire the answer you have dictated, you would perhaps wonder that I should be the person to have borne such proposals. Be assured that in this I did not wrong the purest of all minds. In effect, the answer you have given is nearly the same as that which, without consulting you, I myself returned as probable."

Constance gave him a look of gratitude, and took his hand with an affection which delighted him. He proceeded: —

"But though I had the most entire persuasion that such would be your determination, it was not for me to make it in form to the person who had addressed you. However I might blame him, he had a right to receive it from no one but yourself, and that none but yourself should determine upon his proposals. As they might also affect your legal interests, it was still more imperative upon me to refer them to your own deliberate choice, and not usurp a judgment which none could exercise for you. On the other hand, I had another duty to perform to this unhappy person himself; for, under all his discouragements, I saw that he loved you; a circumstance which, could it influence your

decision, I was bound, in the same plainness and sincerity, to lay before you."

Lady Constance glistened with pleasure, not at the marquess's history of Lord Cleveland, but at his own account of himself; and interrupting him (if one of the sweetest smiles in the world could be said to be an interruption), she assured him that all explanations were unnecessary to vindicate a regard for her honour, "Which, I verily believe," said she, "no one else, save perhaps——;" but she here checked herself, and walked to a garden door, for air, and recollection, and that indulgence of thought which had lately often come over her, and was now one of the few pleasures of her heart.

In the end, it was settled that Lord Clanellan, after conveying her answer to Lord Cleveland, should immediately take order for the defence of her rights, should they be attacked. This being decided on, in a short time (so little worldly was her mind) she seemed to have entirely dismissed from it claims which, even if successful, she felt would never affect, much less destroy her happiness.

Nor was this mere theory. The vindictive Cleveland, spurred equally by pride and the desire of wealth, neglected even politics (now

assuming a most critical aspect) to pursue this new object. He was closeted often with Lord Oldcastle, but oftener still with his lawyers, and with Clayton—which latter person he seemed to have a peculiar pleasure in forcing upon a service, which both his sentiment and his fear of the world's censure, rendered unpalatable. He even ventured to beg off being actively employed against a family to which he said he owed so much. But the iron-hearted earl roundly told him, he could admit of no neutrality, and that he must either obey him as a master, or lose him as a friend.

The sensibility of Clayton made him feel all the prostitution of the word friend, thus used: but in casting about to find a person, if he could, really entitled to that sacred name, on whom he might retire, and who might pour balm into a wounded conscience, he was forced to confess, that his search was vain. Allies he had enough, but they were only such as ambition binds together, in a chain, the links of which are of sand. They were confederated for mutual support, and the confederation lasted as long as the support could be mutually given. That gone, so was the intimacy. These then were not the *friends* to whom he could open a grief of sen-

sibility; and others he had none. He therefore continued the slave he was, and added to the pains of his slavery, the pain of constant anxiety to conceal it,

Lord Cleveland saw this: and, whether from detestation of his hypocrisy, or whether he was glad to make self-blame as noxious to another, as it was to himself; or because, as was the fact, he felt a growing misanthropy against all the world, from his disappointments; certain it is, that he seemed to have pleasure in the oppression of his confident, by putting him, as he said, upon the dirtiest work, in order to try how far his allegiance would go.

And sorely did Mr. Clayton feel it, when the charge of seeing Silverlock was committed exclusively to *him*. For an interview with that worthy person, relative to some farther proofs had become necessary; and as the earl felt that he would be contaminated by the sight of him, the business (to the overthrow of all his fine feelings) devolved upon Mr. Clayton. That Silverlock was a scoundrel, was not that which so much affected him (though this, to do him justice, had a great share in it); but a vulgar and familiar scoundrel, was more than Mr. Clay-

ton could bear. He could perhaps have talked to a rogue, but not to a blackguard.

And now, things being ripe, this momentous question, fortified by the best ability which the bar could command, was brought before the highest court in the kingdom, where, in order to give all countenance to his case, Lord Cleveland took his seat daily by the great magistrate who presided.

The world observed upon this. The judge was the political friend of the noble client, sat with him in council, ate with him at table, and was daily linked with him in public or private pursuits. This was boldly commented upon by the opposing counsel, who had here an opportunity of asserting that fearlessness of independence which elevates the British advocate above all others, and forms a pride of character as essential to the liberties of the people, as honourable to himself.

The great magistrate felt this, and gently hinted to the earl the propriety of discontinuing the practice commented upon. Lord Cleveland, who at first had been disposed to chastise, as he called it, the liberty taken with him by the counsel, had too much tact to oppose the judge.

But such was his anxiety, that he took his seat at the bar below.

The hearing went on, and lasted the whole day, and the court took time to pronounce its judgment. But when the time came, what was the surprise of the world to find that, in the opinion of the court, all the parties were not before it: on the contrary, that a most essential one had not even been named, without whose appearance nothing could be done. In fact, the situation of the families of Mowbray and Cleveland, having been necessarily set forth, and it appearing that, though the title of Mowbray was extinct, not only Lady Eleanor was still in existence, but also a son, who, of course, was her male heir; and who might, therefore, under the deed, have claims as well founded as either of the immediate parties, the court held that they ought to be called upon to appear, before it would proceed with the cause, much less pronounce a decision. The whole, therefore, was ordered to stand over until notices of the suit, and citations to appear, were served upon Lady Eleanor and De Vere.

CHAPTER IX.

ZEAL.

Be thou blest, Bertram, and succeed thy father
In manners as in shape. Thy blood and virtue
Contend for empire in thee.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE effect of the interlocutory judgment of the court was very differently felt by the different parties concerned. Lord Cleveland was furious, and mortified at the same time: not merely that a doubt should be thrown upon his claim, notwithstanding the title of Mowbray was extinct; but that he had, even by possibility, opened a door to pretensions, the success of which would be the very last thing on earth to which he would have contributed.

Lady Constance, on the other hand, was so little disappointed, that she felt a secret and unaccountable joy, which she could not explain,

nor even understand (but still a joy), that there were the most distant chances, though the estates were taken from herself, that they might be decreed to a very different person from Lord Cleveland. Lord Clanellan, however, wrote her word that it seemed the opinion of the counsel on both sides, that the judgment was more of form than any thing else, and would not affect the final decree. If only for decency's sake, they said, the court could not proceed to decide till all the parties who could by possibility be interested, had at least been summoned. Lady Constance, therefore, and Lady Eleanor too (who was with her when Lord Clanellan's letter arrived), continued to think of the suit as usual, that is, as one solely agitated between Lord Cleveland and the heiress of Mowbray.

When the news of the judgment of the court found De Vere, he was at Talbois with Harclai, who waited for it in an agitation which was only increased when he heard its purport; and he trembled with excess of interest when he exclaimed to his friend, "You will, of course, obey the citation."

It was then that De Vere gave that memorable answer, which was at the time so much

blamed by the old, and extolled by the young, "I will be torn to pieces first."

Nor was this a mere temporary ebullition. Whatever might be the construction of law, the intention of Mr. Cleveland, he said, in settling his estates, seemed, notwithstanding the slip, (for he held it no more) in regard to the extinction of the title of Mowbray, clearly in favour of all Lord Mowbray's children, whether male or female. He reasoned thus from the phrase used of "*Lord Mowbray and his heirs*," which so plainly indicated Lady Constance, that his detestation of Lord Cleveland, for what he thought his sordid attempt to pervert this intention, could not be concealed. This would have been his feeling, had the case concerned an indifferent party; but when to this he added, that the attempt was made upon an orphan, and that orphan Constance, his indignation knew no bounds. One, and one only case, he said, could arise, which would induce him to come forward, and that was the certainty if he did not, that, as against Lady Constance, Lord Cleveland would prevail. And when he was told (as he had been on the opinion of lawyers), that this might not be unlikely, if the court held that Mr. Cleveland meant that his estates

should never by possibility go to a female, the heart of De Vere was filled with grief.

It was in vain that Harclai set before him the injustice he was doing himself, and even his mother, by not appearing to the citation of the court; in vain that he descanted on the loss of an opportunity, never to be recovered, for De Vere to obtain all he wanted to fill his proper sphere in the world. "If this can only be purchased," said De Vere, "by the robbery of my cousin, like my father, I will say, 'let us still live in the moated house.'"

Harclai, with some vehemence, and not, perhaps, too much delicacy in his tone, shewed there was no robbery in the case; and that if really Mr. Cleveland never intended to settle his landed property upon any but a male descendant, it was Lady Constance, who was robbing *him*, not *he* Lady Constance. But De Vere, shocked at the very notion, silenced him at once. Harclai now complained to Lady Eleanor; but though she saw not the thing exactly in the same light as her son, she absolutely refused to give him any assistance. "To interpose," said she, "even could I do so with success, would be an affront to the character of my son."

Harclai, who was not a man to be deterred either by difficulty or delicacy, from what he thought right, and who wished nothing so much as to see his friend at the head of a fortune, which he would so well know how to use, made a journey to London, on purpose to consult counsel on the case, and fortified with a favourable opinion, afterwards went to Oxford, to concert, if he could, with Herbert, measures for driving this headstrong spirit, as he called it, out of a romantic generosity which was indefensible. For once, Herbert sided entirely with him, on the unreasonableness of De Vere's self-denial; but with his usual delicacy he protested against all interference with what might so affect the Mowbray part of the family, unless either Lady Constance herself, or her guardian, moved by their own sense of justice, should themselves demand their assistance.

Harclai did not relish this nicety. "I love the girl," said he, "as if she were my own daughter; but she is at least but of a bad breed; and the marquess, though a quiet man, is a man of the world, and if we wait till they wish to part with ten thousand a year, we may wait long enough."

The President however was inexorable. He

reasoned sensibly on the impropriety of what he called officious interference, and the bad taste, to say no more of it, of giving advice unasked. Harclai grew nettled; wished there was no such thing as good taste, if it was to keep so fine a fellow out of his own; and as to officious interference, "Were we not his guardians," said he, "when he could not act in law? and in this point, if he still act like an infant, are we not authorised to manage for him, who shews he can so little manage for himself? Finally, perceiving Herbert fixed in his resolution, he accused him of change, and lukewarmness, because De Vere had refused his advice as to Parliament; an accusation which the President was nearly surprised into resenting, which only made Harclai sure that it was well founded. In the end, he left him in no good humour with the politeness as he called it, of men of the world; and conceiving a bold and decided plan, he drove to Lord Clanellan's, an hundred miles across the country, and asking and obtaining an audience, without thought or preface, at once laid his business before him.

Lord Clanellan was not at that time in possession, in any minuteness, of the different features that had marked the hearing of the cause

He had simply been acquainted, by his solicitor, with the order of the court, and he was thereupon the more surprised at the abrupt proposal of Harclai. As, however, the character of the latter was perfectly well known, his proposal occasioned no very fearful astonishment, even though without the smallest management; but rushing in *medias res*, he opened all his own confident opinion on the case of De Vere, and desired Lord Clanellan, as a debt of justice, that he would either advise Lady Constance to surrender the estates at once to her cousin, or, as he had positively refused to do it himself, to enter an appearance for him before the court.

Though the marquess was deeply struck with this generosity, or rather self-devotion, of De Vere, and, as has been observed, knew all his guest's eccentricity in his benevolence, his first feeling was that of amusement, if it may be so called, at the wildness of the proposal.

"And you think," said he, half smiling, "that as guardian to Lady Constance, and executor of her father's will, I should be justified in surrendering up ten thousand a year to a person who does not claim it himself?"

"I do."

"Or if I do not this," continued the marquess, "that at least I ought to force him to be a

claimant whether he will or no, by appearing for him, though he give me no authority for such an act?"

"If the man is *non compos*," said Harclai "I still say, I do."

"You have then endeavoured to persuade him yourself," said Lord Clanellan.

"I have, and he has quarrelled with me for it."

"He is *chevalier preux*," said the marquess.

"He is a fool," retorted Harclai; "nor do I fear being blamed by you, my lord marquess, for my proposal; for they say you are a just man And as for the girl herself, she is of too high a spirit, and too little like her father, not to say I am right."

"That Lady Constance," observed the marquess, now assuming some reserve, "will ever act with uprightness, no one can question; and that you are but zealous and sincere in the cause you have undertaken, I cannot but feel assured. But that upon a summons like this, to a private, and perhaps not an unprejudiced opinion, I can yield up the inheritance of an orphan committed to my charge, or be guilty of a most solemn and dangerous imposture, by presuming to act for a man in a court of justice, who gives me no autho-

rity to do so, does not precisely come up to my notions of propriety, and is not, I should think, exactly a thing of course. But if such an appearance for another, could be really entertained, excuse me, my good Mr. Harclai, if I ask, why you yourself do not make the experiment?"

Harclai, strange as it may appear, was not prepared for this very simple question; and, indeed, under the blinding power of zeal, having persuaded himself that it was a debt of justice from one party to the other, he had really worked himself up to imagine that he was proposing no more than what was perfectly reasonable; and he stared to think there should be the least hesitation to comply with his views.

"'One thing is clear," resumed the marquess; "that neither you nor I are the court; and another equally so, that though Lady Constance were to listen to your extraordinary proposal, I could not, as guardian, permit her to do so, but must throw myself upon the court, if only for my own justification."

"Would not your own heart's justification be enough?" asked Harclai, with vehemence.

"Not quite," returned the marquess again, smiling, yet rather admiring the impetuosity of his visitor, "though I will allow, could we only

annihilate all law and government, and live like brothers, or rather like angels in this world, we should be very happy persons: and you, my dear Mr. Harclai, might think us very good sort of people, instead of being the thieves and cut-throats, which I fear you do."

"Not quite that," answered Harclai, "though none of us are better than we should be. At the same time, if I do think thus, there are exceptions; and I, at least, meant not, my lord marquess, to include *you*."

"Except as one of the set," returned Lord Clanellan, laughing. "However, to be as mild a rogue as I can, let me assure you, that no difficulty will be willingly opposed by Lady Constance to her cousin, should he appear; on the contrary, that the whole process shall be carried on as if it were an amicable suit."

"The devil of it is," replied Harclai, "that he will *not* appear; nor can any eloquence persuade him out of his obstinacy upon that point."

"It seems that your's, at least, has been tried in vain," said the marquess.

"It has," replied Harclai, "for he swears he will be torn to pieces first."

"Spoken like the generous spirit he is known to be," returned Lord Clanellan.

"Rather like the blockhead he is known not to be," replied Harclai. "I am out of all patience with him, when I consider that the opinions of many lawyers are so much in his favour, and that even the court seems, as far as can be collected, to be inclined to him."

"That I did not know," said the marquess, with some anxiety.

"Not only this," pursued Harclai, "but by not appearing, though he may ruin himself, he will not save Lady Constance, but play directly into the hands of that manœuvring Lord Cleveland."

Lord Clanellan grew alarmed, and, quitting the cool, half rallying tone he had hitherto preserved, asked whether, and how he had ascertained the opinions he talked of, and in particular, the alternative he had just announced.

"I have been keen in my inquiries," replied Harclai, "and find that the court, on the argument, by no means assented to the position that the clause in the settlement that the estates should pass to the Clevelands as soon as the title of Mowbray became extinct, was conclusive against all other conflicting enactments. As little did they assent to the argument on the other side that the general word "*heirs*," once

used, could not be controlled by other words in the context to mean heirs male. This, therefore, had made the lawyers look more favourably towards De Vere. Then, as to the appearance, all agree that if no heir male of Lady Eleanor appear, after notice served, it will be deemed by the court the same thing as if there were none; and then you may be sure the devil will stand by his own, and Cleveland will succeed."

Lord Clanellan was struck with this account, which bore upon it an air of probability, and he became pensive and uneasy. He felt, however, to the bottom of his heart, the chivalrous generosity of De Vere, and could not help exclaiming, as if thinking aloud, "Such self-devotion ought to be rewarded in the only way it can be."

What the marquess exactly meant might be questionable; but Harclai, still full of zeal, rejoiced to think he had produced a change, and replied, "It ought, indeed, my lord: and I am glad to see you come round to my opinion at last."

Lord Clanellan undeceived him as to this, and all that the man of impulses could obtain from him was, that he would immediately lay

before Lady Constance and her counsel the resolve of her high-minded relation, together with all its probable consequences. The consultation with counsel was, however, prevented that very day; for before Harclai had quitted the house, a long and detailed opinion was transmitted by post from Lord Clanellan's lawyers, in which the views of De Vere's case, as taken by Harclai, were, to the great joy of that zealous friend, amply confirmed.

CHAPTER X.

ILL NEWS NOT ALWAYS ILL FORTUNE.

Mine ear is open, and my heart prepar'd
The worst is worldly loss, thou canst unfold.
Say, is my kingdom lost? Why, 'twas my care!
And what loss is it to be rid of care?

SHAKSPEARE.

THE marquess was soon at Castle Mowbray, where he found Lady Eleanor, who had become the *chaperon*, in the shape of a frequent visitor of her niece; and who by her kind care, and the authority that seemed to belong to her in that place, furnished a refuge to Constance, of which she fully understood the value. Lady Eleanor, indeed, could not help observing, that much as she always had possessed it, she seemed to enjoy more than ever of Constance's affection, which was shewn in a thousand engaging and delicate attentions.

As they were quite alone, no opportunity was wanting to their mutual and entire confidence,

and many were the interesting subjects of the conversations they held together. Among these, two predominated, the probable event of the law-suit, and the establishment of Constance in a marriage worthy of her.

Neither of these topics were favourites with the pensive heiress, though she was feelingly enough alive to her defenceless situation; and often, with her aunt, as she walked the terrace, or the straight lined cypress avenue leading to the castle garden, she would entreat Lady Eleanor to spare her a discussion which gave no cheering either to present thoughts, or prospects to come.

"As to Lord Cleveland's success," said she, "I am perfectly indifferent."

"Too indifferent, dear Constance," said Lady Eleanor. "For after all, we ought not to be insensible to the assertion of our rights, or the power of doing good on so extensive a scale as your present fortune affords. With such a mansion as this, and sprung from such noble blood as once presided here, the necessity of keeping up the dignity of both is surely not a matter of indifference, while the world is what it is. And hence, my dearest niece," continued Lady Eleanor, "the unspeakable interest I

feel, not only that you should succeed against Lord Cleveland's scandalous attempt, but in the end find a protector worthy of you; in saying which, need I add that he ought, not less in all gifts of birth and fortune, than in all qualities of mind, to be selected from the noblest of the land."

"Dear aunt," replied Constance, "I know all your partiality would wish for me; nor am I insensible to the high duties cast upon me. But I entreat you, as I have entreated my other kind friends and guardians, to leave this matter to Providence. At any rate, let us see the result of this unexpected suit, about which there are such different opinions, before we hazard any discussion upon another question, far less necessary, though, I acknowledge, far more perilous. Believe, that if the result of the suit is unfavourable, it will at least bring this consolation along with it, that it will shorten the difficulties of that other question, in a great and pleasing degree."

"You mean," said Lady Eleanor, "that the diminution of your inheritance will diminish the chances that you are sought after for your fortune, not yourself."

"I do."

"Into this," replied Eleanor, "I can enter; and I think that, were you less endowed, there would be a surer hope of your being sought for yourself alone. Whoever is the aspirer, he must be capable of appreciating all the high qualities of my excellent Constance; and I own, when the other requisites of corresponding rank and wealth are almost equally necessary, the chances seem to me to be narrowed."

"And yet," returned Constance, hesitatingly, and pausing often between her words, "why must wealth be necessarily one of these requisites; wealth, of which there is already more than sufficient?"

"Because," replied Lady Eleanor, "were my niece a princess, she would only do honour to her rank; and a prince, or the noblest of the peers, might make his nobility still more noble, by allying himself with her.

"And yet, dear aunt, this was not your own choice, though born of the same stock, and holding the same rank with myself."

"If nobility is in the mind," returned Lady Eleanor, with an elevation which never abandoned her when she spoke of her husband, "I could not have chosen more nobly, more proudly than I did; but besides this, your

uncle was of the best blood in the kingdom, and you forget I was not the heiress, though of the house of Mowbray."

"Nobility *is* in the mind," said Constance, and fell into silent reflection for some minutes, only adding, "Yes! the De Veres, as you say, are of the best blood of the kingdom."

She would have gone on, but something, she could not tell what, stopped her, and the conversation languished for a few moments more; when, in a more decided tone, she proceeded—

"As for this inheritance, what am I likely to reap from it but embarrassment, or perhaps danger? Is it not better, then, to leave it to Him who knows what is best for us, and to whom we even pray for deliverance, in all time of our wealth, as in all time of our tribulation, and in the hour of death itself?"

Lady Eleanor, much moved, embraced her niece, on whom this piety sat so gracefully, as well as so naturally, that it only made her more touching; while it accorded so entirely with Lady Eleanor's own long-nursed feelings, that she forgot for a while the whole scope of the lesson she had been endeavouring to inculcate.

"I am but a poor adviser after all," said

Lady Eleanor, "yet this suit of Lord Cleveland's is as fearful as it certainly is dishonourable; and hence one cause of my anxiety, that my Constance should be settled in a manner not only worthy of her, but with a person capable, by his own wealth and power, of defending her rights."

"That will not soon be," said Constance, with gravity, for extraordinary as it may appear, she took no pleasure in these sentiments, and could not help observing in her secret heart, that her aunt seemed almost studiously to avoid the mention of a name, with which she had begun to be afraid to trust herself. At length, however, it appeared no more than natural to ask what was the opinion of her cousin Mortimer upon the issue of the suit?

"That Lord Cleveland is dishonouring himself," replied Lady Eleanor, "and that, whatever the construction of law, the plain intention of your ancestor was, that *all* your father's children, male or female, should succeed before any son of mine, or before the estates could return to the Cleveland family."

At that instant the iron gate at the end of the avenue grated on its hinges, and to their surprise, though also to their pleasure, Lord Clan-

ellan advanced towards them. Constance ran up to him, and willingly received his salute, while Lady Eleanor, with somewhat more form, asked what had procured a visit, always agreeable, but on this occasion so sudden and unexpected?

"To tell you the truth," said he, "I came to seek refuge from that wild philosopher of yours, whom Herbert calls the man of the woods, and who seems to me to deserve his appellation."

"What has he been doing now?" asked Lady Eleanor.

"*En voie de fait*, nothing," said the marquess; "but in the way of advice a great deal."

"Advice! advice to you?"

"Yes, and to our dear Constance here."

"To me!" exclaimed Constance, "and to what purport?"

"Only, without farther inquiry or trouble, to cheat Lord Cleveland of his just rights, by surrendering all your great grandfather's estates to your cousin Mortimer."

"Poor Constance turned scarlet at this sudden intimation, which fell in with she knew not what preconceived notions and feelings, but

which she had never dared to analyze or examine within herself. Judge, then, her surprise, and almost consternation, at having this very notion roundly propounded to her, though evidently in a tone of the most absolute raillery. She, therefore, only felt relieved, for the time, by her aunt's taking up the subject in answer to Lord Clanellan.

"Harclai is sometimes so eccentrically enthusiastic for his friends," said Lady Eleanor, "that I can be surprised at nothing in their favour, however outrageous, which he may be pleased to entertain. But in this matter, marquess, your better knowledge of the world, and of this particular case, would, no doubt, have corrected him."

"He is above any correction of mine, I assure you," replied the marquess; "nay, as for that, I would believe he would be impenetrable to the Lord Chancellor himself. He, however, brought me news, by which I find your son is equally impenetrable on his side, though it is the other way."

He stopped, and looked at both Lady Eleanor and Constance, in order to ascertain how he might best proceed with the subject. Lady Eleanor seemed somewhat conscious, and only

hazarded, in a lowered voice, "Depend upon it, De Vere will decide as becomes him." This produced another pause, when the marquess, saying the question was whether he should appear to the citation of the court, Constance, in a downcast hesitating manner, ventured to ask, "And how has my cousin decided?"

"That he will be torn to pieces first," said Lord Clanellan, "which I own——"

But the marquess could not go on; for on looking at the face of his ward, he saw there such contending emotions, that he was fain to obey a sign from Lady Eleanor to suspend what he had to say.

Constance had in truth been much shaken in nerves since the great change, and final demise of her father; and she had not recovered, when the fresh agitation occasioned by Lord Cleveland's conduct, and the suit he had instituted, shook her anew. And this, added to the secret uncertainties of her heart, (secret even to herself) made her particularly susceptible of either great, or soft impressions.

This announced conduct of Mortimer, excited both; and when we consider who he was, and that it was herself in whose favour he had made this emphatic declaration, with all our respect

for the decision and firmness of this high, but soft-minded girl, we ask a few grains of allowance of the reader, if we cannot relate any thing very heroic in her demeanour, on the occasion.

To own the downright truth, she was completely surprised by it, and to her own subsequent dismay, suffered an exclamation to escape from her, in which, though in a suppressed tone, the words, "too generous Mortimer," were easily to be distinguished; and spite indeed of the presence of her aunt, and, what was more, of her guardian, her eyes filled with tears of gratitude at this account of De Vere's devotion to her cause.

Lady Eleanor soothed her with fondness, and her guardian, after supporting her to a bench, said he would fetch water from a fountain that played close by. But she instantly recovered herself, and with some dignity continued, "I am not ashamed of this emotion, though it shews how weak I am in nerves. But a stronger person might be overset by such generosity, which yet, however," added she, trying to smile, "must be punished by forcing him to appear. And you, my dear aunt, who must have been in the plot with this towering spirit, do you think

that it can, that it ought to be suffered? or, setting all question concerning yourselves aside, that I could ever consent to enjoy what might not be mine, from what would at best be mere connivance? Do, my dear Lord Clanellan, tell this high lady that there are other Mowbrays in the world besides herself, and that in all proper subjects of pride they are almost as proud."

Lord Clanellan heard and hung over her with delight, and was preparing to open what he had in fact made this little journey to propose, when Lady Eleanor, with some solemnity of manner, took up the subject.

"Do not let this matter be misunderstood," said she, "nor impute to De Vere or myself either more pride or more generosity than belongs to us. That under our confined fortune, or even were we rich, we should refuse what the law might *fairly* determine to be our own, even though it might trench upon the funds of one so properly dear to us, would be a generosity as unreasonable as I know it would be unavailing; for I do my niece but justice in feeling convinced that to such a proceeding she would never consent. Let her not think, therefore, that there has been either plot or intention

to *connive* at any thing for her advantage; and if Mortimer or myself enjoy credit with her for this, away with our false plumes!—strip us of our thin colouring, which cannot bear the light. To seek to reap the reward of merit for not appearing to a suit like this, would be a mockery of all real generosity, and unworthy, I trust, of the party to whom you attribute it. I know that Mortimer merely pursued his own firm conviction of what is the right, and the just, at the expence of what may or may not be the law; and trick would it be indeed if, from inadvertence alone, or defect in phraseology, he would suffer, by any conduct of his, an obvious intention to be defeated, and an orphan daughter to be deprived of her patrimony. In short, feeling that the law as well as the right, ought to be with you, and that we are summoned merely to fulfil a form, my son simply wishes to free the case from unnecessary difficulty, and leave your whole force at liberty to combat an antagonist of far different pretensions. This, and this only is the extent of what you are pleased to call generosity; and if for this we are proud, poor indeed is our pride."

Accustomed, as both Constance and Lord Clanellan were to the elevation of mind of Lady

Eleanor, especially when speaking or thinking of her son, they were particularly struck with the manner in which, on this occasion, it was disclosed. But however light her aunt seemed to make of the determination, however she might herself be impressed with the truth of Mortimer's representation, Constance was feelingly alive to the warmth and zealousness of that same Mortimer in her favour; and the fervor of his attachment to her interest, and the burning words in which it had been displayed, sank into herheart. She was silent, but pressed her aunt's fingers within hers, and her countenance exhibited those emotions of good feeling which, when they appear in a young and lovely woman, always make her loveliness so much more attracting. 'Twas well for De Vere that he was not within their reach.

But if such were the impressions of Constance, with such imperfect suspicions of the truth, what would have been her feeling had the real truth been known to her, as she now very soon learned it from Lord Clanellan. That upright person could no longer conceal the opinions at least that were entertained in London upon the probable, as well as possible success of the claim of De Vere, could he be pre-

vailed upon to enter his appearance ; and though he had been lost for a few minutes in admiration of the self-denying ordinance of Lady Eleanor in regard to their pretensions, the justice of his nature, as well as his very admiration, prompted him now to come to the point, and open the important object of his visit. It was obvious from the seriousness of his manner, that something sat heavy upon him ; and Lady Eleanor, thinking that she might interfere between guardian and ward, would have retired, but the marquess requested her to stay.

"It is happiness," said he, "to think that though what I have to lay before you, may shew an adverse interest between you in a worldly point of view, yet of such honourable materials are you both composed, that I would even seek out the one, to be the confident of the other."

Constance was all attention; and Lady Eleanor observed, "Marquess, you speak in mystery."

"After the colouring you have just now so generously given to your son's determination," returned the marquess, "you will probably think what I have to say, at least, surprising. But though I frankly avow my anxiety for my dear Constance's interest, it is merely right I should tell you, that the appearance of Mr. De Vere is

not the indifferent thing you would represent it; and that there may be far more danger from him than from Lord Cleveland."

"Danger! from my son!" exclaimed Lady Eleanor.

"There can be no danger from my cousin," said Constance, with great sweetness, though the words half died upon her tongue as she attempted to speak them.

"I quite agree," returned Lord Clanellan, "that nothing that can be called danger by a just and honourable mind, can be apprehended from a just and honourable man. But, pursuing the forms of worldly speech, we must call that danger which threatens our fair expectations, and our supposed right to the fortune we enjoy. I do not say that this danger is very imminent, or very certain; but from what I learn, I would not have Lady Constance think only of the claims of Lord Cleveland."

"And is that all?" cried Constance, with an illumination of countenance which was perfectly charming, and only the more striking from its contrast to the seriousness which the exordium of the marquess had created. "And is that all?" said this exemplary girl; "that I, who may perhaps be adjudged an unlawful intruder upon

the inheritance of another, may be forced to restore what does not belong to me, to its rightful owner. Oh! if this be the cause of your seriousness, how little occasion was there for it! how little do even *you* know me!"

"It will not be easy, I grant," said Lord Clanellan, "thoroughly to know the extent of my dear Constance's disinterestedness; but because she is disinterested, or that the contending party may be a person of so much merit as Mr. De Vere, we must not, on that account, slight the lessons of prudence, or neglect the proper steps for defending our right."

"Say, rather," interrupted Constance, with increasing cheerfulness, "to see the right properly determined, let it belong to whom it may."

"I feel this to be your principle so entirely," replied Lord Clanellan, "that although, if a blow be struck, *you* will be the sufferer, my *business* is rather with Lady Eleanor, than even with you. In a word, on every account, Mr. De Vere must be *forced* into this appearance. For even had he no pretensions himself, he may, by persisting, give Lord Cleveland an advantage frightful to think of."

"If the alternative," observed Lady Eleanor, after some thought, "is success either to De

Vere or Lord Cleveland, there can be little hesitation, even though it may so cruelly press upon our poor Constance here."

"Oh! call me not poor," exclaimed Lady Constance, "for if it enrich you, my dear aunt, and ——" she hesitated at the name she was about to add, but at length fairly introduced her cousin, though by the name of Mr. De Vere—"if it enrich you and Mr. De Vere, never will it make me think myself poorer. But besides, who could consent to be rich, if at the expense of the rights even of a stranger, much more of such near and dear connections? Even Lord Cleveland's success would be preferable to this. But if my guardian *fears* my cousin's claims are founded, and he thinks that Mortimer will succeed against the earl's pretensions, though also at the expense of mine, he need not have brought so sad a countenance to tell the tale, for there could not be happier news."

The face of Lady Constance confirmed this sentiment, even better than her words. It was almost radiant with joy; and far from experiencing any difficulty in the course of action he meant to advise, Lord Clanellan found his ward ready in every thing to prevent him. She was full of alacrity, and urgent in joining her

persuasions to his, to induce her aunt not only to obey the notice of the court herself, but to use all her influence with her son to join in that necessary act.

Lady Eleanor was embarrassed, and pensive upon what had been communicated. But the ardent Constance was alive for the rest of the day. Her spirits, which had for a long time drooped, seemed to revive, and she was all the evening peculiarly buoyant and engaging with Lord Clanellan, who never admired her more.

He observed a thousand traits of the new interest which had thus got possession of her, and was struck with the gaiety of tone, in which, looking at a great map of the Yorkshire estates which hung over the oak chimney in the guard-room, she laughingly exclaimed, "I always hated Yorkshire."

The night closed with a serious conference between the marquess and Lady Eleanor, in which the latter was made fully aware of the real points of her son's case, and sensible at last that her grandfather might really have intended that his estatse should not descend to a female. She therefore agreed to write a letter of expostulation to De Vere, in which the real party he was about to serve, and the reverse of assistance

which he might be affording to Constance, were strongly set forth. This letter the active Lord Clanellan charged himself with, and the next day he set off for Talbois.

The change in the spirits of Constance seemed to improve in proportion as her confidence in her lawsuit diminished. There was an elasticity in her look and manner, to which she had long been a stranger. She was still often pensive, but it was not the pensiveness of gloom; she seemed pleased, she knew not why, and was evidently under an excitement of the most cheerful kind, only the more remarkable, because even to herself the cause of it was unknown.

CHAPTER XI.

A QUARREL.

Oh, Cassius, you are yoked with a amb,
That carries anger as the flint bears fire,
Which, much enforced, shews a hasty spark,
And straight is cold again.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE marquess found a different scene at Talbois; for a contest, amounting even to serious altercation, if not to serious quarrel, had, for the first time in their lives, arisen between De Vere and Hârclai. The latter, from the high soaring of his hopes, for the friend he loved best in the world, and in a cause which the chances of success had made more interesting than any other he had ever engaged in, had flown into downright rage at the still persisting obstinacy of De Vere.

"To think," said he, (caring little for the terms he used) "that a man of such mind should act as if he had none; that he should have the parts and knowledge of a man, yet

want the sense of a child! Why, my very dog Triton, would know better!"

De Vere bore all this, and more, without feeling ruffled; such was his value for the old man, and so habituated was he to his ebullitions. But when, with the true verjuicy look, which Harclai's features always assumed when under the influence of real contempt, he reproached his former pupil with being a mere boy, who gave up the certainty of fame, wealth and power, for an object *unworthy* such a sacrifice, a mere *puling girl*, the indignation of De Vere was roused beyond bearing; and he became jealous, and even fierce in the repression of what he termed little short of blasphemy.

Harclai, in real anger, persisted in his tone of contempt; and in his fear and irritation at thinking such a chance for fortune should be so thrown away, lost all the little command of temper he had ever possessed. He even went so far as to accuse De Vere of being more under the influence of a school-boy passion, than a genuine sense of honour, and, in a taunting tone, added, that like the doating Antony, he had "kissed away kingdoms and provinces."

The feelings of De Vere were cut to the quick.

At first, listening only to his wounded honour, he darted a look of fire against his accuser, but luckily found no immediate vent for the speech which he meditated in reply; and before he could summon his words, a sort of sorrowing came over him, to think that he could be exposed to such a reproach from one who had always so loved him, always been himself so beloved. He was, however, too much offended to pursue this softening train; and after checking some pent up words which struggled to escape, he limited himself to saying that Mr. Harclai's age gave him privileges which he was sorry to say he had presumed upon, and that he must doubt the reality of a friendship which seemed to be made a mere mask for insult.

"I never insulted you, boy," said Harclai.

"You have done worse," replied De Vere; "and that so profanely, that it cannot be passed over. You have dared to disparage one, whom, I can only say, you have neither feelings nor faculties to appreciate; and the only excuse I can make for you is, that you cannot comprehend the purity of the sentiments for which you presume to reproach me."

So saying, he abruptly left the drawing-room where this conversation passed, and descending

the stairs, with a hasty step, sallied forth to recover himself, as well as he could, from the bitter feelings of his wounded spirit, which this altercation had caused.

Harclai, on his side, was too much moved to prevent De Vere's departure, and his emotion partook still too much of anger to attempt it. His grief at being thwarted in what appeared so reasonable as well as so brilliant, had occasioned a paroxysm, which, in any great crisis, he was too little able to check. When, therefore, De Vere was gone, he contented himself with exclaiming, "*Quem deus vult perdere*," and betook himself to walking the room in considerable agitation.

"Yes!" cried he, "the youth has gone away, stark staring mad, and this is what I get by my advice. However," continued he, (while his strides became longer and quicker) "he will soon come back again."

Then cautiously opening the door, he stretched his head into the passage, to observe, if he could, what had become of the fugitive.

"No!" said he, "he is gone, and perhaps will not return! that sharp temper of his has been much soured of late;" and he resumed the exercise of walking, only at a quicker rate

still, adding to it a long solo of whistling, which seemed to assist in bringing the relief he sought to his feelings. Returning to the door, he then walked to the landing-place and went half-way down stairs, to discover if there were any signs of the motions of his friend—but in vain. He searched for him in the rooms below, became agitated, and almost alarmed, and seizing his hat, broke out into the garden.

"Insulted him!" cried he, as he looked into the different walks. "I never insulted any man in my life. But he was always a touchy boy."

Then, trying to recollect himself, "But what the devil," continued he, "had I to do with calling Lady Constance a *puling girl!* and how d—d unfortunate that confounded quotation about 'kissing away provinces,' should just then pop into my head!"

In this manner, and in an anxiety increasing at every failure in his search, did our man of impulses stride over the garden; till at last a fear came over him, which did not allay his uneasiness, that De Vere, offended *à l'outrance*, had gone, not meaning to return, and would in the end break with him for ever. The notion melted the heart of the old man. He began to tax himself with the injustice, and at any rate

the want of decorum, he had used in his reproaches; and the virtues and softness of Constance, whom he had always admired, but whom he had so disparagingly mentioned, coming across him at the moment, he threw himself on a bench, wiped his forehead; and, completely subdued, some strange drops, like tears, actually rolled down his cheeks, as surprising to himself as they perhaps may be to some (but I trust not to all) of my readers.

This paroxysm over, he again set himself in motion, and proceeded to the stables, where it was observed he shewed an unusual curiosity to know if De Vere's horses were all in their stalls. Satisfied on that point, he returned to the house, which he once more searched; but finding no one, he shouldered his cane like a sentinel, and in pensive mood resolved to walk up and down the broad walk before the door, wisely concluding that if De Vere had not abandoned his home he would return to it, and if so, by the usual entrance, when he would be certain of catching him.

Nor was he disappointed; for a very few minutes brought De Vere back to his mansion, but to Harclai's annoyance, brought the marquess also. In fact, having strolled, with little

ease of mind, as far as the great forest gates that opened upon Needwood, and knowing little whither to proceed, or how to act, he was surprised, and at any rate diverted from his moodiness, by the sight of Lord Clanellan's post-chaise. The marquess, instantly stopping, took him in, and it was thus that both gentlemen surprised the penitent and no longer cynical Harclai on his post.

Lord Clanellan was, in truth, not sorry to find him there, and had begun to address him with a friendly salutation, when, to his utter astonishment, used as he was to his extravagancies, the man of the woods passed him by, neglecting his civilities, and seizing De Vere round the neck so as much to discompose his own wig, called him his dear boy, his good fellow, and said that he rejoiced to see him back again.

De Vere, though somewhat abashed at being made party to a *scene*, (which he always hated,) and that under the eyes of the marquess, was alive to the force of nature, as it worked in his eccentric old friend. He felt his own anger, seriously as it had been kindled, gone in a moment, and, without a single word of explanation, (which the presence of the marquess indeed forbade, but which, without it perhaps, would

have been unnecessary) a mutual, though tacit forgiveness was interchanged, and peace was restored, where, indeed, the wonder was that it could ever have been broken.

The effect of this upon Harclai shewed itself in a number of whimsical gestures, chiefly displayed in little attentions to De Vere. He offered to take his hat; reached him a chair, when they all entered the great dining room; and perceiving that his coat had contracted some dirt from the wheels of the carriage, was in a hurry till he had got a brush to remove it. In short, he was like a nurse who had quarrelled with her favourite child, and thinking she had corrected him too much, was not easy till she had made it up with him.

To Lord Clanellan this was an absolute riddle; nor was De Vere at his ease under such peculiarity of behaviour. But the surprise of Lord Clanellan was of little consequence to the feelings of Harclai, who was unrestrained by his presence, and would have been so by that of a king, in the enjoyment of the happiness to which he yielded himself—the purest, perhaps, which can belong to a good mind, and of which none but a good mind is keenly susceptible—the happiness of reconciliation.

The marquess saw that something had happened between the friends, but was too well bred to ask an explanation. He very considerately, therefore, allowed the ebullition of Harclai to subside before he opened the object of his visit, "which," said he, "the presence of Mr. Harclai is so far from embarrassing, that, knowing his attachment to you, and his cognizance of the very case that brings me here, it is perhaps an advantage to meet him just at this time, and on this very spot."

Harclai, however, felt a little return of agitation when he found what business the marquess was upon. He feared the renewal of a subject which had cost him more feeling than he had expended for many a year; and when he heard the proposal of Lord Clanellan, that, for reasons he was prepared to lay before him, he hoped De Vere would appear to the notice of the court, the philosopher rose from his seat, and took to his usual diversion of walking up and down the room, exclaiming at intervals.

"I wash my hands of it—a burnt child dreads the fire—I only hope you will succeed, you will do more than I could."

"Were I to confide in my own efforts alone," said the marquess to De Vere, "where our good

friend here has failed, I perhaps might not be very sanguine; but I bring with me in this letter from your mother, what will at least carry weight; and in the urgent wishes of Lady Constance herself, which I was requested by her to press upon you with all the power I was master of, I trust I shall at least find support."

De Vere changed colour when this message was delivered. He hastily opened and read his mother's letter; and the marquess, not to annoy him, turned to the window; but Harclai, too eager to consider the niceties of decorum, came close to him, and though he did not actually look over his letter, watched every turn of his countenance while he was reading it. The arguments of Lady Eleanor founded upon what she had heard, were soon passed over; but the letter closed with a few words from Constance herself, which seemed to rob the Hybla bees, and leave them honeyless. She told him sweetly how much she felt the generosity of his purpose in her favour; but, still more sweetly, hoped that he would be obliged to renounce it. "If really these estates are not mine, and must be adjudged to you, or Lord Cleveland, need I say," added the postscript, "who has my wishes?"

"My cousin acts like the disinterested angel she is," exclaimed De Vere, when he had finished reading the postscript, for the third time. "But that is the contrary of a reason why I should enlist myself against her."

"If ever there was an angelic mind," said Lord Clanellan, "it is hers. But give me leave to say, that this is no question of generosity, either on her part or yours. You have neither of you the right to be generous, till the law has determined who has the power of being so."

"Right!" observed Harclai, overjoyed at finding the marquess so entirely with him.

De Vere shook his head, still thinking of his postscript.

"You will, however, allow me to ask," continued the marquess, "of what materials you think Lady Constance composed, that, on the supposition that the estates are really and lawfully either yours or Lord Cleveland's, she can submit to receive them from either of you, as a gift? For such it would be, if they were only left with her by sufferance."

Harclai declared this was a staggerer, and there was no getting over it; "and I am glad," added he, "to find the girl is as proud as yourself."

De Vere gave him a look of reprehension at the freedom of the epithet he had used; which, under the ascendancy which De Vere had just acquired over him, told as he would have it, for it made him actually retreat. The marquess went on: "I could enlarge much upon this subject of pride between you, but the case really does not need it. I am sorry to be forced to think, from all the advice I have lately had, that my ward's title hangs by too slight a thread, to be even benefited by your chivalrous intentions in her favour."

"Attribute nothing to me that is not my due," replied De Vere. "Were the estates really mine in justice, I would not do my cousin that wrong, I would not dare to shock her nobleness, by presuming to offer her an eleemosynary present. Were I a sovereign, I might lay provinces at her feet; as a mere equal, or rather as the inferior being I am, presumption indeed would it be in me to pretend to be the benefactor of Lady Constance. But were the Lady Constance as inferior to me as I am to her, and I found that I had power to wrong her, through the mere ambiguity of the law, need I say, marquess, that I would not, could not profit by such ambiguity?"

"Nobly spoken," said the marquess, "and worthy of the high-minded man and woman who gave you birth. I indeed seem to hear my gallant and lamented friend the general, in these sentiments. But would you engross all generosity and justice, nor allow others to be either generous or just? In particular, would you prohibit one who is as near to you in character, as in blood, from partaking of these sentiments?"

"Heaven forbid!" cried Mortimer, "for with Lady Constance, I do not enter even into competition. What I mean is, that I would not profit by *chicanery*, to gain, not merely fortune, but——" he stopped.

"I would ask you to proceed," said the marquess, "but that really the word you have used is misplaced. Lady Constance's own counsel tells me, not only that he despairs of success, but that he ought not to succeed. For your ancestor's intentions are clear, and the *chicanery* would be on our side. May not therefore the upright Constance be equally shocked at the thought of profiting by such wrong? But when we add to this, that your refusal to appear, far from benefiting her, will probably throw this whole inheritance into the hands of another, (who certainly does not seem to stop at chi-

canery); when we are told that in the event that we have no title, and you do not come forward, the alternative is Lord Cleveland, I trust I have said enough to bend you from a purpose which I verily believe is only so obstinate, because it is so honourable."

De Vere felt himself moved; and Harclai, whose attention had been fixed by all this in a manner to make his solemn features whimsically cheerful, could not refrain from advancing towards Lord Clanellan, as if he meant to embrace him. He contented himself, however, with shaking his hand almost off, and exclaiming at every twist he gave, "Marquess, you have won my heart for ever."

De Vere, thoughtful, reflective, uneasy, and shaken, at length said he would so far yield himself to the reasoning of Lord Clanellan, that he would study the law opinions which had been given on the various claims. These he had scarcely yet allowed himself to peruse, satisfied that Lord Mowbray had been the uncontrolled owner of the estates, and that his cousin was not only his sole legatee, but his rightful heir at law. He was now, however, ready to give a more unprejudiced attention to these opinions, especially as he was alive to the deciding argu-

ment of the marquess, that, if he did not appear, his ward's case could not stand under the settlement, in comparison with Lord Cleveland's. Harclai, delighted, immediately pulled out of a large letter-case, two or three folio papers which the old gentleman had drawn up in concert with his lawyers in town, but which De Vere had utterly refused to inspect. To these, the marquess added the letters of Lady Constance's own counsel; and some hours were now dedicated, in the closet of De Vere, to the consideration of the most important question which had ever in his life demanded his decision.

The result was an immediate journey to London, and many conferences with the counsel, whose opinion Harclai had taken, and who, being of the first eminence at the bar, succeeded at last in proving to De Vere, that, though he might sacrifice himself to Lord Cleveland, it would produce no benefit to the case of Lady Constance.

CHAPTER XII.

CONSCIOUSNESS.

> I have mark'd
> A thousand blushing apparitions
> To start into her face ; a thousand innocent shames,
> In angel whiteness, bear away those blushes.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

THE horn had sounded loud and shrill up the steep of Castle Mowbray, as the post advanced along the avenue that approached it at bottom. Constance and her aunt were at that moment upon the terrace, and each looked with anxiety for expected intelligence. "My cousin," said Constance, "will surely have decided by this time. Strange! that so clear an understanding should allow him to be so proud!"

"Do not let us blame him," said Lady Eleanor, "should he be in error, if he err on the right side."

"Surely it cannot be right," replied Constance, "to sacrifice himself to Lord Cleveland."

"You forget your own rights, dear Constance."

"No, indeed," answered Constance, "I only have done thinking of them, because every body says they are no rights at all."

"And are you so indifferent?"

"Alas! no! far from indifferent, for I wish this hill were not so steep, that you might have the letter which that unconscious little wretch is bringing you so slowly."

Now, the unconscious little wretch whom Constance thus abused, was forcing his poor jade to strain her veins to get up the hill the quicker, from seeing he was waited for by the ladies of the castle, and a minute or two placed the expected packet in Lady Eleanor's hands.

"It is astonishing," said her son, "what a sensation these concerns of ours have occasioned in both the law and other circles here. It is only to be equalled by the extraordinary ignorance which prevails on many of the facts. By many, I am represented (that ever such horror should be promulgated!) as seeking to enrich myself through the ambiguities of law, at the expense of one, in defence of whose rights you know I would expend my own last shilling.

"What a world is this, when truth can be so violated, and honour so sported with! Much as Lord Clanellan's account of the law opinions is confirmed against the interests of that dear one, whom it cuts me to pieces to seem to oppose, sooner would I suffer such destruction than submit to such degradation in the public mind. There are moments when I would hide myself in Siberia, rather than, by obeying the citation, encourage such a notion. But the alternative is too revolting. While Lady Constance's counsel exhibit any thing but confidence, the opinion of all the others is, that if *we* recede, *Cleveland* must prevail—Cleveland, who has succeeded in persuading the world, that a mere well-born beggar is seeking to better his fortunes at the expense of his family.

"I grieve to tell you, mother, how all this affects me. You may judge of it by your own feeling, and your remembrance of that clear spirit from which you are separated. But the argument of Lord Clanellan (to say nothing of Harclai, who is here) is unanswerable. However jealous you may be of your own honour, say they, however anxious for another's rights, if the first can be cleared by the mere truth, and the last must be sacrificed to an unprincipled in-

vader, unless you appear, are you to quit the field when flight would only prove the more certain destruction of the cause you most wish to maintain? This perhaps would not shake me; for, if a mere ambiguity, or, as I should call it, chicanery, is to despoil a noble orphan of her fortune, it will not relieve me that that spoiler should be myself. But when I am told the clear intention of our ancestor was, that no female should succeed to these estates, and that the real question lies between Lord Cleveland and me, I feel that, if this can be proved, I ought even from duty to stand in the breach. Something also whispers me that by doing so, I may repair the injustice of fortune, and at the same time take a noble revenge on the world."

"And what is that revenge?" asked Constance, in agitation, on her aunt's finishing this letter.

Lady Eleanor turned to her niece, and beheld, in her eloquent eyes, and speaking manner, all that these passages had inspired. But she was scarcely less agitated herself. "Poor Mortimer," exclaimed she, "with a soul so clear, to be exposed to calumny!"

"He is too high for it to reach him," said Constance.

"Yet it reached him before," observed Lady Eleanor.

"So it did Mr. Wentworth," returned Constance, "and how has it been put down? Depend upon it," continued she, proudly, and yet somewhat joyously, "my cousin will assert himself, and I rejoice at his decision: but these passages about revenge I do not understand."

"My noble girl!" cried Lady Eleanor, "but I trust not the less true to yourself, than noble to others."

"Dear aunt," cried Constance, "what mean these mysterious words?"

"I scarcely know," said Lady Eleanor, and she pondered once more, the concluding passages of her son's letter.

"Depend upon it," at length she exclaimed, "he will ever be true to you, Constance."

"True to me!" cried Constance.

Strange that such a little sentence should have the effect of exciting all that beautiful colour we once described as belonging to Constance. It mantled on her cheek, deepened the rose of her lip, and gave an additional sweetness to her eyes, which, however, became instantly downcast, as if shunning inquiry, the moment she felt herself observed by her aunt. Oh! lovely,

rich, delicious confusion, of a pure and sensible heart, that fears its own secret! What pencil can paint, what pen describe thee? Alas! not mine, though imagination has not yet abandoned me, and my dreams of Constance are not yet over. No!

> "Time hath not yet so dried this blood of mine,
> Nor age so eat up my invention,"

but that Constance, whose friendship exceeded in delight the rapture of many a transitory passion, still dwells in my memory; and when I think of that friendship,

> "The loveliest visions still can shed
> Unfading pleasures round my head;
> Nor would I change, or happier be,
> For all love's fleeting ecstasy."

The reader, if he is young, will excuse this little rhapsody; if old, I refer him to the days of his youth. I trust, at any rate, that he has feelings still left, not so deadened by the strifes of the world, as to be insensible to the power of goodness and beauty conjoined, as they appeared in the abashed, yet all-awakened Constance. Such she was, when she found her aunt scrutinizing her, after the little exclamation which

she had suffered to escape from her, of "true to me!"

We will not say that with all her singleness of heart, and inexperience of the passing world, the notions which now came into Lady Eleanor's mind, entered there for the first time. From a period very soon after Lord Mowbray's death, and pointedly from the time of the memorable discussion between the cousins, in regard to the seat, the manner and language of Constance respecting De Vere, had been gradually changing. There were evidently more restraint, more caution, more fear: but also more interest, more surprises, more confusion; and as Mortimer's own secret was now fully known to his mother, what wonder if even a less guileless person than Lady Eleanor, should have watched all this vigilant scrutiny? But since the prospects consequent to the law-suit had so expanded, an anxiety, from we know not what hopes, or opinions, or curiosity, had taken possession of her heart, in regard to the real feelings of her niece towards Mortimer. A more adroit mother would have perpetually endeavoured to fathom this, till she had succeeded in the investigation. But in the uncertainty respecting her son's future fortune, Lady Eleanor did not herself

know what to wish, and did not therefore dare (or was not mistress of the art, had she dared) to gain any thing from her niece, which her niece did not choose to tell her.

Still, from the interest displayed by Constance for Mortimer's decision, and then for his success, and not a little perhaps from the contentedness, and sometimes more than contentedness, with which she contemplated her own probable failure, Lady Eleanor could not help drawing conclusions, which she knew not yet whether to hail with joy, or deplore with sorrow. If her son proved to be Mr. Cleveland's heir, and could therefore pretend to such a jewel as the affection of Constance; in what crown, or by what monarch, was ever jewel worn with such pride as this would be by Mortimer? Should he fail, and continue to languish in his present inferiority, she knew his heart too well not to feel convinced that it would break before he would permit it to encourage pretensions, though he might not be able to prevent it from fostering love. And then that dearest point of his ambition, the favour of his cousin (that ambition which made him laugh at all for which the Oldcastles and Clevelands were struggling),

would only be misery to her without being felicitous to him.

Such were the contending feelings of this virtuous woman, whenever she thought of what might be passing in the heart of her niece; feelings for which the world would laugh at her, but for which I and others gave her all our reverence, and still give it, now that she has long been where she may be smiling at that same world, and all its anxieties, its grandeur, and its littleness.

But, return we to our story, and the beautiful confusion of Constance, which told so much. The scrutiny of her aunt lasted not half a minute, yet it produced a silence of some time before her consciousness appeared to diminish. It was rather a relief to her, therefore, than otherwise, to be interrupted by her groom of the chambers advancing along the terrace to announce the visit of no less a personage than Sir Bertie Brewster.

He approached them with rather a jaunty air, his hat off several paces before he came up; when he intimated that he was just from town, in his way to his seat higher in the country, and could not help going out of his road a few miles to condole with them on the loss they and the

country had sustained in his excellent old friend Lord ——, but he stopped, for he saw Lady Constance shrinking, and even shivering with the repugnance which the latter part of this speech had excited. A peasant's honest clumsiness would not have so shocked her. Unconscious of his bad taste, Sir Bertie asked if she was ill.

"Not ill," said Lady Eleanor, "but you see Lady Constance is overcome by unexpected visitors."

Far from taking his leave, Sir Bertie offered his arm, which was declined; when, unabashed, he proceeded, "Well, now, this is very extraordinary, considering how many months have passed—"

"Sir Bertie," interrupted Lady Eleanor, "we are obliged to you for your good intentions, but you see Lady Constance is not well."

Then fearing a continuance of the ill-judged topic, she hastily added, "Perhaps you bring us news from town?"

"There is nothing," returned Sir Bertie; "that is, nothing at court, but this sad history of Lord Cleveland's claims against your ladyships. I do hope and trust he will not succeed."

"And is that all?" said Lady Eleanor; "there must indeed be a dearth of news, if such things can interest."

"I am glad to find your ladyship so much at your ease," replied the knight; "for I was shocked to hear that it was very likely Cleveland would succeed, especially after that extraordinary discovery, which he made in so extraordinary a way, and which all the world say does such credit to his resolution and generosity; though I, for my part, think it may be attributed to very different motives."

Lady Eleanor expressing her ignorance of his allusion, the pleased Sir Bertie said he should be happy to acquaint her with the story, only he quite wondered she had not heard it before. He then informed them, that Lord Cleveland had one day received an anonymous letter telling him that one Silvertop, or Silversides, (he could not tell which) who was a gambler and highwayman by profession, had stolen a deed, on which the whole title of Lady Constance to the Yorkshire estates depended; that his lordship had in consequence proceeded alone to the cellar of some inn in the Strand, where the letter said the robber lived concealed, and drawing his sword before the wretch could get at his

pistols, which he attempted to do, forced him to surrender the deed, which he most generously restored to the Mowbray family.

Spite of their late seriousness, neither of the ladies could help being almost amused with this perversion of the truth, and the credulity of the world in allowing currency to such a report. Lady Constance, however, wished not the conversation to proceed, and contented herself with saying it was an extraordinary world; but Lady Eleanor could not help asking Sir Bertie how the same persons who believed in the generosity he had talked of, reconciled it with the suit which Lord Cleveland had instituted?

"That to be sure is a little difficult," replied the knight, turning to Constance; "but the report is, that Lord Cleveland's lawyer, who was entrusted to restore the deed, naturally read it first, and then discovering that the late Lord Mowbray had no right to bequeath these estates to your ladyship, you had yourself forced Lord Cleveland to commence these proceedings in the nature of an amicable suit, in which we are all so sorry (particularly I assure you, her Majesty herself) to hear he is likely to succeed."

And with these words, and fifty bows, the

happy knight, (happy in having been admitted to this visit) took his leave.

"And is it thus," said Lady Eleanor, as soon as he was gone, "that the world can palter with facts? and are these the certainties by which men's actions are judged? If this story be admitted as not false, what history can be true?"

"This, and my cousin's letter," observed Constance, "are enough to render one afraid of the world. What I saw of it before, did not make me in love with it; what I hear of it now, makes me dread to return to it. Yet with such persons as Lord and Lady Clanellan, and you, dearest aunt, and Mr. Wentworth, and a few more, human nature cannot be so bad as Mr. Harclai sometimes says it is. At the same time I am still puzzled with what my cousin Mortimer means by taking his revenge of it."

Lady Eleanor said she was puzzled too, in which she perhaps spoke more from a wish to quiet the agitation of her niece, than from ignorance of the meaning of her son. The walk, however, here ended, and the morning passed in that sort of serious abstraction, amounting not quite to sadness, but far distant from that happy calm which is always so incompatible with a state of suspense.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COURT.

You are well encountered here, my cousin Mowbray."

SHAKSPEARE.

Is that the law ?

SHAKSPEARE.

WILLINGLY would we return to the public interests of this interesting time, from which many readers may think we have been too long absent. For the star of Mr. Wentworth had begun to prevail over that of his rival; and from the advance towards an improved state of being, of every kind, throughout the nation, which we formerly touched upon, the influential ranks in the state looked for a spirit more decidedly patriotic than they found in the trimming politics of the minister. In fact, not to repeat former topics, Lord Oldcastle's government was so little cemented by any known great principle, that, upon the smallest concussion, it was ready

to fall to pieces over his head. But to this we cannot yet return; for we own ourselves so absorbed in the private fate of De Vere, and of her whose interests seemed to govern him more than his own, that perhaps we may be forgiven if we pursue that part of his story to its end, although it may carry us, in point of time, a little beyond some other incidents, which are yet of no small consequence to our general design.

The arrival of De Vere and Harclai in town made a considerable change in the face of things; and Herbert, who was on the spot, did not now refuse his counsel. The rectitude of the President, upon being informed of the probable reality of things, could not withhold his opinion, when asked by De Vere; but before he took any active part, he requested and obtained leave to consult Lord Clanellan, as the guardian of Constance. "I so entirely," said he, "love and admire that exemplary creature, that even my love for, and desire to benefit you, would not permit me to stir hand or foot to do her harm." De Vere forgave him from the bottom of his heart.

The good President, however, felt relieved when he found from Lord Clanellan, that in the

opinion of all that part of the family, the real question was between De Vere and Lord Cleveland; and he willingly therefore brought to De Vere's little council the aid of all that ability and shrewdness, tact and knowledge, for which he was so remarkable.

It was presently known, that, as between De Vere and his cousin, the suit had become purely amicable. By degrees, too, the truth respecting Lord Cleveland slipped out. The scene with Silverlock in Kensington gardens, was accurately stated; and the consequence was, that no private cause, save perhaps that of Douglas or Annesley, ever excited the public interest more. The effect upon Lord Cleveland may be conceived. He was lowered in that predominance which in every thing he affected; he was accused as a grasping man, who would, if he could, take advantage of a legal flaw, to deprive a family of their undoubted rights. His unhappiness of mind only increased; and though while under he actual excitement of the process, his feelings perhaps were smothered, yet in the solitude of his closet, or his chamber, he was a remarkable instance that, in point of real prosperity, he with whom the world seems to go best, may

sometimes envy those whom it appears to favour least.

As the final hearing approached, Lord Cleveland's anxiety became almost unbearable. It was not that he now hoped success for the sake of the wealth it would bring to himself; but for the sake of that which it would keep from another. It is certain that with external coolness, and even carelessness of manner, he execrated himself a thousand times a day, for the chances of fortune which he had thus forced upon De Vere. Sad example of that want of regulation, and that habitual worldly indulgence, which were the original causes of his mental ruin.

Upon the hearing, the court was crowded. Peers and ministers were upon the bench, where also appeared Mr. Wentworth, who seemed, from first to last, to be as interested as any of the parties. Lord Clanellan mixed with his friends, and talked undisturbedly of the cause. Lord Cleveland did so, too, and talked of Newmarket. De Vere would have been absent, but for the absolute requisition of his counsel, who said that there were points upon which he must not refuse to put himself under their guidance. Not so, Harclai, whom the requisition of the

same counsel could not keep away, and whose saturnine countenance, as arguments pressed for or against, shewed itself in a manner sometimes even to interrupt the peaceableness of the proceedings.

The counsel for Lord Cleveland began. He took high ground, and reasoned strenuously and cogently upon the positive enactment of the deed, in favour of his client, and the total want of it on the part of Lady Constance. He marked the pointed difference in the rules of law, as applicable to deeds, or wills; that the one was technical, the other general; the will open to explanation by common phrases; the deed always strict, and construed to the letter. Hence the preamble to the will was always something, to a deed generally nothing. But under either, he said, Lady Constance must fail; as, from the whole tenor of the settlement, whether in the preamble or the body of it, nothing could be clearer than that an heir male, and not a female, should succeed. Who that heir male was to be, was the question; and he contended that it could only be Lord Cleveland. "For although," continued he, "the descendants of Maria, Countess of Mowbray, are pointed at in the *preamble*, and that might avail to shew in-

tention, if it were a *will*; yet it cannot stand in competition with a positive, unambiguous, known form of conveyance, such as that, upon the extinction of the title of Mowbray, the estates shall go to the Earl of Cleveland, in *tail male*." He admitted that there was the faint expression of 'failing Lord Mowbray and his *heirs*,' without saying *heirs male*; but this, he contended, was merely incidental, and could not stand against the clear, definite proposition in the deed above mentioned. But if farther proof could be wanting, it was put expressly out of doubt by the provision made for female descendants, by a fixed sum of money to be charged upon the estate. Then, as to the claim of Mr. De Vere, the same reasoning, with the exception that he was not provided for at all, applied against *him*, for that his claim was chiefly founded on the preamble, which in the mere general language of common parlance, states it to be the intention of the settler, that the estates shall go to the *descendants* of Maria, Countess of Mowbray. But could this even pass for any thing of itself, it was positively contradicted by the express proposition in the body of the deed, in regard to the succession of the Earl of Cleveland, upon the extinction of the title of Mow-

bray. Upon this the advocate took his stand, and pressed the judgment of the court.

The audience, for the most part, were impressed by this argument, to which the court listened with patient attention; after which, it turned to the counsel for Lady Constance, who had at least the comfort and support of the good wishes, and, so far, of the encouragement of all who heard him. When he began a discussion on the technicalities of law, there was indeed little kindling; but when he proposed to put them all aside, for the sake of common sense and common justice; and when, as he said, he came forward in defence of a noble, but unprotected orphan, whose inheritance it was sought to spoil, and who had nothing to trust to but her natural rights and the shield of the law, all hearts were with him, and the great magistrate on the bench seemed himself to give him his sympathy.

The audience appeared to go along with this feeling, and, but for their sense of decorum, so characteristic of an English court of justice, they were disposed to mark their concurrence by indications which reverence for the administration of the laws, alone forbade.

The adroit counsel, perceiving himself in pos-

session of this vantage ground, pressed upon the great judge the reasonableness and even duty of seizing upon the slightest opening which the law would permit, in furtherance of justice; and as the words heirs and descendants *unmodified*, occurred, that he would, as he might, consider Lady Constance as included in that character, and give judgment accordingly. "But," said the able advocate, warming, "if I am denied this; if this noble and injured lady is to be weighed down and destroyed by technicalities; if an obvious mistake and contradiction (for on such alone does Lord Cleveland depend) is to prevail against the speaking rights of nature, I will abandon the whole deed, with all its provisions, present and remote; I will return it to this great nobleman to be restored to the pure source whence he obtained it; and I will own that it is impossible it should stand, from its blunders and contradictions, which, from beginning to end, baffle all discussion, and must for ever prove fatal to it in a court of law; and then, my lord," continued the counsel, raising his voice, "what will be the result?" Here the spectators both on the bench, at the bar, and on the crowded floor, became fixed and silent in an anxiety of expectation. But when the ad-

vocate added, in a tone of confidence, "The result will be, that Lady Constance must succeed, not only as legatee of her father, but as heir-at-law of her ancestor," a feeling of joy seemed to electrify the audience, and all eyes were turned to the bench to discover, if possible, in the countenance of the judge, the effect of this sudden turn of argument, which appeared to be so favourable.

Assuredly, notwithstanding its labours, there is much to envy in the situation of an advocate—much more in that of a judge; thus to have all eyes, and almost all hearts hanging upon them; not from the tinsel glare which surrounds them while performing their duties, but because of the magnitude of those duties, and the powers and virtues necessary for their fulfilment. That heart must be cold indeed, which can contemplate, without warming, not perhaps the most glorious, but surely one of the most interesting spectacles a great country can afford, namely, the exertions of eloquence and knowledge, in the cause of invaded rights. We will not enter into the vanity which dictated the ebullition of "*arma cedant togæ*," but in the civilized world, we question whether the proudest puissance of a conqueror holds up a more exciting object for

imitation, than the animation of an able advocate, or the clear virtue of a judge engaged in the distribution of impartial justice.

On the present occasion, many were the examples of this powerful influence; for several youths of high hopes were fixed in their professions by what they heard and saw on that memorable day; and all others, for a long time, remembered the thrilling interest of that exciting argument.

It is the duty of a magistrate, however, to have no passions, or at least to act as if he had none. To be sure, the high-charactered lawyer who presided, appeared to be moved by this appeal; but he contented himself with saying there was much cogency in the argument; and then turning to De Vere's counsel, calmly announced that he was prepared to hear him.

But now a fresh subject of interest arose; for the counsel to whom this was addressed, having consulted with his client, (who then instantly retired) rose in his place, and spoke as follows:

"My lord, on the part of the honourable person who has just left the court, I have to declare that he is no willing party to this suit. He, as well as myself, and, I believe I may add, all those who heard the learned counsel who last

addressed you (without excepting him who began this unhappy question for a very different claimant), felt every word of the cogent argument that was adduced against the validity of this deed; and, should the settlement be overturned, my client will be the first to hail that position, as sound, which held that the Lady Constance, the true heir of her father, is also the true heir of her ancestor. Mr. De Vere claims to say, that he is no invader of an orphan's rights. He has been *dragged* before this court, as reluctantly as ever slave was dragged at the wheels of a conqueror, nor would he ever have obeyed the citation, had he not been informed, that if he declined, the case of this noble lady, so powerful in natural right, was so controuled by the act and intentions of her ancestor, that she never could succeed. And then, my lord, should he not have appeared, this rich inheritance would have been decreed to one who could himself have no right but what the technicalities of law would award him. But things are altered. Your lordship is called upon for a decision, which may not be to interpret, but to annihilate the deed on which Lord Cleveland relies; and against this call Mr. De Vere instructs me not to say one word. If such should be your deci-

sion, no friend of the Lady Constance, not the Lady Constance herself, nor even her departed father, could he now be a witness of what is passing here, could feel more gratification than this gentleman, that the fortune which it was intended should descend upon her, should be confirmed to her for ever, by your lordship's decree."

A buzz of applause at this speech could not be repressed, nor diverted even by the strange gesticulations of Harclai, whose dissent from every word of it was manifested in the strongest manner. The spectators, however, did not partake his feelings; for all were struck with unmixed admiration at the generosity and self-devotion of De Vere; and the case of Constance herself scarcely excited more regard, or more sympathy, than this proceeding, which was characterized as noble, from one end of the court to the other.

The dignified magistrate who presided, looked at first displeased at this invasion of the solemnity of the place; but, at length, having restored order, he was willing, he said, to forgive the interruption, for the sake of the natural admiration which such conduct had excited: "An admiration," continued he, "which I am myself

not entirely without; for who can hear these sentiments, or witness this self-denial, and not feel himself moved? It would be well for the world if there were more Mr. De Veres in it; for well has he sustained the high ancestry from which he springs. But not the less am I bound, sitting here, to do impartial justice between all the parties before me; and if I am thus, though a little prematurely, called upon for an opinion, although merely an interlocutory one, I am obliged to say that I am not prepared to go the length of the counsel for Lady Constance, and pronounce that this deed, with all its faults, is absolutely invalid."

The spectators seemed struck with disappointment at this opinion; and blank looks succeeded to the former animation. Lord Cleveland, however, was full of hope from it, and could not prevent himself from rising, and actually bowing as if in thankfulness to the court.

Without particularly noticing this interruption, the judge called upon De Vere's counsel to state, upon the supposition that the deed could be supported, though Lady Constance's claim under it were to be rejected, what were the grounds of his client's case, as against the claim of the Earl of Cleveland.

The advocate made a short but forcible answer, which he rested entirely on the circumstance that the clause within the body of the deed respecting De Vere as heir male of Lady Eleanor, was quite as technical and unambiguous as that which passed the estates to Lord Cleveland, upon the extinction of the Mowbray titles; and then, these two being contradictory clauses, the preamble was immediately let in, and this decided the matter in favour of De Vere.

It was observed that the judge seemed to go along with every word of this argument. The attention of those present became also more and more intense as it went on; and, at its close, far from any interruption, by observations or otherwise, a silence, peculiarly dead and solemn, tied up every tongue in anxiety for the decision.

The great person who presided had, from the first, formed his opinion, which was only strengthened by the arguments from the bar. He, therefore, at once addressed himself to the case, and as he who writes was present, and took the fullest notes of words the most interesting that friendship ever heard pronounced, it would be with fondness that he would indulge

himself in recording at length this memorable decision.

But the subject is exhausted, and he is desirous of sparing the reader's patience. Suffice it, therefore, to remember the observation of the great magistrate who pronounced the judgment, that though the confusion that hung over this complicated case, disfigured and veiled almost every feature it presented, yet, if he could brush away these disfigurements, and leave a sufficiently fair face to be looked upon afterwards, it was his duty to do so.

"And yet," added he, "I shall do this with mingled sensations of pain and pleasure, if it be permitted to a judge to have pain or pleasure. For though I feel bound to declare my opinion, that this orphan lady cannot succeed, I am equally bound to decide in favour of him whose feeling and lofty conduct this day has done him so much honour."

The friends of De Vere were animated with joy; but the whole court continued to hang in intense and silent attention on the judgment as it proceeded.

The great magistrate then detailed his reasons for pronouncing that Lady Constance could not succeed, which were, in fact, those produced

at the bar, provided the deed was not destroyed by its contradictions. These he allowed to be so great that they extinguished one another, so that, if nothing sound remained behind, the whole deed itself would be annihilated, and then the case contended for by Lady Constance's counsel would arise, and her ladyship would succeed as heir at law to Mr. Cleveland.

"But a sound part," continued this upright judge, (in a voice growing peculiarly solemn and impressive), "a sound part *does* remain, and it is in favour of Mr. De Vere. It has been argued, indeed, at the bar, that no mention is made of him but by implication in the preamble. But, looking at the enacting clauses in the body of the deed, I find, that failing the heirs male of Lord Mowbray, the estates are vested in the *heir male* of Lady Eleanor De Vere, which this gentleman is. There is, therefore, abundant room to satisfy the strictest forms of technicality, quite as much so as in the conveyance to Lord Cleveland. Form, therefore, being satisfied in what relates to Mr. De Vere as well as Lord Cleveland, we are allowed to look at he preamble with a view to the intention of the settler; and, if the two cases are contradictory (which they certainly are), that intention must decide.

But if this be so, nothing can be clearer than these two propositions—first, that a male only, and not a female, can take under this settlement; next, that Mr. De Vere being not only with Lord Cleveland actually included in the technical enactments of the deed, but also (which Lord Cleveland is not), embraced by the solemn scope of the preamble, it will be too much to say, with such superior weight in his favour, that because Lord Cleveland must fail, Mr. De Vere cannot succeed. Lord Cleveland's claim, no doubt, contradicts Mr. De Vere's as far as it goes; and the claim of Mr. De Vere, equally contradicts Lord Cleveland's. The one is upheld by the preamble; the other destroyed by it; yet a call is made upon me to support that which is destroyed, and utterly extinguish that which is supported. This cannot be, and I am bound by my judgment to invest Mr. De Vere with all the rights designed for him by his ancestor.

"Of the noble claimant against whom I am thus forced to pronounce, it would be needless for me to go out of my way to speak. I sit not here to appreciate motives, to take notice of the talk of the world, or to inquire how documents have been discovered. My duty, as my business, is to decide upon those documents when

once brought before me. The right of the earl to have his claim investigated, feeble as it is, is incontestible. But thus much I will permit myself to say, that with such palpable proofs of the intention of his ancestor before his eyes, and such plain internal evidence that the re-passing of the estates to the Cleveland name, upon the extinction of the title of Mowbray, was a mere *slip*, and could not mean to disinherit a person so precisely described as the heir male of Lady Eleanor; had the deed been so constituted that technicality, and not justice, had prevailed, it would have cost me a pang to have pronounced judgment in his favour."

It would not be easy to describe the effects of this decree upon those who heard it. The lawyers from the other courts had flocked to listen to it; and they, as well as their clients, neglecting for awhile their own cases, together with numerous other auditors who had caught the interest it inspired, formed themselves into groupes to canvass its merits or demerits. But the former prevailed; and if there were a thousand friends of Lady Constance who were grieved, there were at least as many of De Vere who rejoiced; but, except by Mr. Graves and

his clerks (whose faces were blank enough), no one seemed to side with the Lord Cleveland.

And now the court began to clear. The higher order of spectators dropped off one by one, and rolled away in their carriages, while the barristers, closing their briefs, discussed the question as they walked home to their chambers. In a few minutes all was tame and vapid, where intense interest had so recently prevailed; and at length, some lingering business of course having been disposed of by a few stragglers, the chief magistrate himself left the bench, preceded by his officers, with his train borne through the hall. A quaint old usher took possession of the seat of justice, in order to arrange its disordered paraphernalia, and turning the key of the door, which he put into his pocket, this illustrious and peopled chamber, which, within so short a time, had resounded to the voice of eloquence, was left a mere ordinary room, deprived of its interests, and consigned for the rest of the day to silence and solitude.

CHAPTER XIV.

> I pray you give me leave to go from hence,
> I am not well; send the deed after me,
> And I will sign it.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

> What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue?
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

THE whole town soon rang with the eventful proceedings which were recorded in the last chapter; for the groupes which at first had collected in Westminster hall, to discuss the various arguments they had heard, had at length dispersed to different parts of the city, and carried with them every where a report of the discussion they had witnessed.

Lord Cleveland had been among the first to endeavour to depart as soon as he found the decisive bias of the court. But he could not penetrate the throng, and was compelled to hear the concluding observations of the judge. When

he did succeed, therefore, in making his way, his resentful feelings had so got the better of him, that he entirely lost the self-command which had once distinguished him under disappointment. He left the court, indeed, swelling with rage, which in vain he attempted to conceal, and moodily answered the mistimed condolences of some of his friends, who embarrassed his retreat, by declaring "That it was a most unrighteous judgment." At that moment the great person himself who had pronounced it, came by in all his state, and so little was the earl master of himself, that in return for the salute he received, he flung back a look of defiance, and even went so far as, in no under tone, to accompany it with the word "*upstart*."

The bystanders, of whom there were many, who witnessed this outrage, for it was no less, were seized with a sort of horror, and Lord Cleveland's immediate acquaintance, to whom he had addressed himself, dropped instantly away. They were afraid of being made parties to what in truth, excited general indignation. The high personage who had been thus grossly affronted, passed on in unresenting dignity at the time, but being not of a temper to submit to such an outrage, not merely upon his person,

but his office, a severe retribution was looked for by those who knew the character of both lords. The earl, with this fresh cause of self-blame, was not consoled by his solicitor Graves, who had waited for him, and to whom, thinking he had an important communication to make, he could not deny the audience he asked. But finding that it was merely to discuss the question of costs, which Graves said would, he feared, be enormous, he reprimanded him bitterly for intruding upon him then, and desired that he might hear no more about any part of the case, nor even see him again till he was sent for.

He then shouldered his way through whole ranks of inferior persons, who still crowded the passages, and annoyed him with looks of vulgar curiosity. Wrought up at last to almost frenzy, he found and entered his carriage, the door of which, his footmen (seemingly catching the rage of their master) closed with hasty violence, and posting home at the full speed of his horses, he ordered himself to be denied to all the world.

The contrast between him and the other defeated party (for Lord Clanellan's interest for his ward was so great that he might almost be thought the real party) was singular. His first

impulse was to look for De Vere, with a view to congratulate him: but learning that he had fled from the hall as well as the court, he drove instantly to his lodgings, where he found Mr. Wentworth had been his forerunner.

That attached friend and buoyant man, had watched every look of the expressive countenance of the judge in pronouncing his decree, and had began to move almost before the last words fell from his lips. He was the first out of court, and was, in a few minutes, with his friend.

"Your face," said De Vere, "seems to bring me good tidings: provided *he* has not succeeded I am satisfied."

"*He* had not a chance from the beginning," returned Mr. Wentworth, "but you were ever a Quixote, and I must really set you down for as mad a person, for this reception of a man who comes to give you joy of ten thousand a year. It will at least make good your old device upon that old crumbling column of yours at Talbois—the almost leafless oak, and '*Insperata floruit.*'"

De Vere was astonished and overjoyed, but he was also dismayed and grieved at the same time.

"That he has failed is well," cried he, "and that I have succeeded——"

"Is well also," replied Wentworth, without interrupting him; for a pause seemed to come over De Vere as he uttered these words.

"But you are really the most extraordinary personage I ever knew," continued his friend: "a princely fortune falls at your feet, as if from the clouds; and yet you seem not disposed to take the trouble of picking it up."

"Indeed you mistake me," said De Vere; "I am thankful; very thankful." At the same time his countenance accorded so little with the sentiment, that Wentworth, at first astonished, on looking at him, and perceiving him rapt, and intensely serious, began to think him overpowered, and hastily asked if he was not well? "I thought you would have borne this better," said he.

"And yet I bear it well," answered De Vere. "I shew no extravagance, I have not attempted to jump out of the window, nor even have I yet embraced you for your kindness in coming so quickly to tell me this news."

He said this still with an air of absence and pensiveness, as if his thoughts were not with his words; and Wentworth was so struck with it,

that he could not help telling him, he was either stupified with his good fortune, or that there were things on his mind, which he perhaps should do well to leave to his own management. "If the first," said he, gaily, "I will send for a surgeon to bleed you; if the last, I will come and see you when you are more disposed to see me."

This recovered De Vere from what really had been an abstraction, which had disabled him from receiving his friend as he ought.

"Judge me not so ill," said he, "nor think me so ordinary a person as to be stupified with sudden good fortune. You have ever been so admirable a friend that there is but one objection I can have to unburthening myself to you entirely, and telling you the cause of the absence I find I have been in."

"And what is that?" asked Wentworth.

"You have never been a lover," answered De Vere, "and by consequence cannot know the feeling occasioned by the knowledge that your own success, half ruins her you love."

A heavy weight seemed removed from De Vere's heart, by this disclosure of the secret that absorbed him, to one so worthy of his confidence: and perceiving that Wentworth was not

recovered from the surprise occasioned by it, he went on—"No! you of the *mens divinior*, who worship power in order to benefit mankind at large, cannot stoop to the little commonwealth of a single heart. You are above the swelling of a lover's wishes, for the well-being of an individual like himself—a mere unit among the millions whom you seek to influence and to govern. But yours, I allow, is the nobler ambition."

"My dear friend," cried Wentworth, kindly, (for De Vere seemed to be still too elevated to come down to the common level of discourse) "why all this? Or, even supposing what you say of my ignorance of the *beautiful passion*, why imagine that I cannot enter into all your feelings, and what I now see, and am glad to understand, is the true key to your apparent apathy."

"Bear with me yet," said De Vere, "for I have still some busy, burning notions, which long to escape, and be embodied in something practical, and which, mounting to my brain, must, I fear, give me an air of stupid ingratitude. But I trust you will excuse it," added he, grasping Wentworth's hand.

"Stupid or ungrateful you never can be," said Wentworth, "but you may be for awhile overcome; and I would leave you to embody these notions you talk of under an intelligible shape, but that I really think I should do you no good by consigning you to yourself. Meantime, I, who know your long cherished, and almost hopeless love for Lady Constance, can easily understand the mixed nature of your present feelings. Your generosity to her electrified the whole court."

"It was too cheap for merit," said De Vere. "Now, indeed—" and he was relapsing into pensiveness.

"Now, indeed, your restraints are removed," replied Wentworth. "You are free to enter the lists with any man; and if you take my advice, your first step will be to lay this fortune once more at her feet, provided she take *you* along with it."

De Vere shook his head, still looking clouded with doubt. "The proviso," said he, "is dishonourable, and I would give twice the fortune, did I possess it, could I restore what has been taken from her, without condition."

"Admirable!" said Wentworth, laughing; "and how glorious if she should happen to

accept the gold, and reject the lover! How glorious, to be posted upon all the blind walls of the town in a brown paper ballad, as the gentleman who made love to a lady of high degree, with a purse of money which he laid at her feet, and how she put the money into her pocket, and ordered the gentleman to be turned out of doors."

Wentworth was going on in the same strain, when, seeing his friend's countenance working with agitation, so that the veins of his forehead were swollen, and he seemed to breathe with difficulty, he "changed his hand," though he could not "check his pride;" and, with a totally altered voice and manner, said, "My dear fellow, forgive this ill-timed raillery. I see I am wrong, and feel all your honourable purpose. But come into the air, and dissipate for a moment these too swelling aspirations. They are, at present, too much for you."

"Perhaps they are," said De Vere, throwing up the window, when at that moment he beheld his two friends, Lord Clanellan and Harclai, walking to the door.

Wentworth's first impulse was to meet, and stop them from coming in; but he afterwards thought it might give his friend the very diver-

sion he wished for him. Nor was he deceived. The interest which always hung about the marquess, from his connection with Constance, by giving a powerful excitement to De Vere, recalled his absent senses; and the wild and uncouth joy of Harclai, which disdained to conceal itself, either on account of the presence of Wentworth, or the delicacy due to Lord Clanellan, completely succeeded in restoring him to his presence of mind. Wentworth having ascertained this, and thinking there might be subjects between the marquess and his friend which needed no witness, fairly invited Harclai to accompany him in a walk, which, from his respect for him, the humourist did not like to refuse, and De Vere was left alone with Lord Clanellan.

The marquess, though far from cast down, nay, rejoiced that Lord Cleveland had not succeeded, had no joy in his countenance. He was most sincerely glad that if Constance was doomed to fail, the success should be De Vere's; but he felt, as he ought, the immense subtraction of fortune to his beloved pupil. Though his pressure of De Vere's hand, therefore, was hearty enough, and the congratulation he gave

him perfectly sincere, there was a gravity on his features which he could not disguise.

De Vere felt a sort of confusion, as if of a guilty person, while he replied to the marquess's compliments; and, strange to say, for the first time in his life, seemed afraid of looking in the face of the person he addressed. At length, breaking silence, he said, "How I wish this whole affair could have been avoided."

"I believe you," replied the marquess, "and to say so, is to say every thing. Need I add, however," (and he sighed as part of the sentence escaped him,) "if our dear Constance is to lose this fine inheritance, my satisfaction that *you* are the person who obtains it?"

"I thank you," said De Vere, with an air of thoughtfulness; "but I am by no means satisfied with the soundness of the decree. It was evident to me that the deed was good for nothing, and then Lady Constance ought to have succeeded. Would to God, that—" and he stopped in evident agitation.

"That what?" asked the marquess with interest.

"That she, that you, that all of whom it concerns, would still so consider it."

The marquess looked amazed, and asked his meaning.

"It is difficult to bring it out," answered De Vere; "difficult to—and yet I have it written here," added he (placing his hand on his breast), "in characters as plain and intelligible as if they were printed."

The marquess still looked, as he was, in ignorance; though a faint gleam of what was meant, began to open in his mind, and with some suffusion in his countenance at the magnanimity he suspected, he asked for a more definite explanation.

"I could," said De Vere, still faltering, and now keenly watching the marquess's eye, "not only satisfy real justice, but take a noble revenge on the world."

"What has the world done to offend you?" said Lord Clanellan.

"It has thought me a scoundrel," answered De Vere. "It has dared to suppose that I have appeared to this suit, in order to rob an angel of her own."

"Whoever thought so, could himself only be a robber," replied the marquess. "But my dear De Vere, you are not yourself; your imagination is too raised; your ideas too wild for

your judgment: your very eye shews too much fire."

"Will you not aid me then to quench it?"

"By all means, if you will tell me how."

"Restore this fortune, this robbery, to its rightful owner," said De Vere, "and I shall then be restored to my senses."

The marquess was about to reply, but De Vere continued—"Yes! I shall then convince an unjust world, and Lady Constance herself, if ever she imagined such a thing. But no! that heavenly mind is too pure and single in itself, to imagine aught against another without proof." He again paused, but the marquess, willing to hear him out, would not now interrupt him.

"I can convince them all," continued De Vere, with great elevation, "that it never was my design to feed upon an orphan's substance, which is even now mine only through the imperfection of law."

"I now understand your generous purpose," said Lord Clanellan, "and as guardian to Lady Constance, my heart thanks you for it. But on her part, have a care, lest the heavenly mind you talk of, should not equally reject an advantage which might also be hers, only by the

imperfection of law. The true measure of all this difficulty, is the intention of him who made the settlement; and supposing that to point at *you*, had it been really set aside only from defects in technicality, could Lady Constance, think you, any more than yourself, submit to succeed against the unequivocal intention of your common ancestor? While I give you, therefore, all the admiration you deserve for this feeling, be assured I will never affront a mind as generous as your own, by laying your desire before her; as a proposal to be answered; though such an intention ought not, and will not, be lost upon her, any more than upon the world."

"Nay," cried De Vere, now in most agitated alarm; "this must not be. Never will I consent to be held up to man, or to woman, as a person who professed a purpose which he knew could not be effected; and if you, with your cool judgment, tell me even as guardian to Lady Constance, that you cannot and will not, aid me in my desire, I request, I insist, nay I exact it, marquess, of your honour, that you will not expose me to the meanest of all suspicions, that of a design to acquire credit for a disinterestedness which never was in danger."

De Vere said this with warmth, and almost

with heat. He grasped the marquess's hand, which he pressed violently with both of his, as he added, "Promise me this, and you will be the noble friend I have always thought you. Refuse it, and I will ever set you down as my cruellest enemy."

The marquess was much moved. He had admired De Vere before, for his unparalleled generosity; he admired him more now for his genuine magnanimity. Yet was he in a difficulty how to reply. He felt the call so energetically made upon him, he felt that if he complied, and gave the promise exacted, he must keep it. The marquess was neither casuist nor sophist; he was an honest man, and as such he knew what would be right; and having preserved his truth for fifty years, he was not now going to tamper with it. But he felt also that it would be most unfair for De Vere, considering what had been the talk of the world, and particularly unfair upon him in respect to Constance, to conceal from every one the nobleness he had displayed. He therefore hesitated, and while De Vere hung upon his answer in expectation almost breathless,

"It would be easy," he observed, "to evade the question you put so home to me, or, if I gave

the promise, to elude it. But I am not a person who have mental reserves, and I will never bind myself to surrender my discretion, in the power of doing justice to one who so deserves it. Surely," added he, perceiving a sort of anger in De Vere's countenance, "I may pretend to sufficient character with you to be trusted with your delicacy, as well as with your honour, and you must not take it ill if I request to be so trusted."

It was some time before De Vere could reply, so deeply did he seem to brood over what pressed upon him. At length, with some effort, he ejaculated, "We differ wide as the poles; I know not your design; but if you give me not this promise, I am ruined."

"My dear De Vere," replied the marquess, "compose yourself, nor fancy design where there is none. Think only, that a man of prudence as well as honour, does not unnecessarily fetter the future; and trust that a person who is twice your age, and who loves you, will not easily be brought to do you harm. But I must leave you, to inform my poor Constance of the events of the day. Poor indeed she is not, cannot be, while so rich in principle. For I know that had she succeeded, and even Lord Cleve-

land had been supposed the rightful heir to these estates, she never would have enjoyed them."

So saying, he embraced De Vere, with many professions of regard and esteem, which he was most sincere in saying had been much raised by his conduct on this trying occasion.

CHAPTER XV.

RESIGNATION.

Mine ear is open, and my heart prepared.
The worst is worldly loss, thou canst unfold.
Say, is my kingdom lost? Why, 'twas my care,
And what loss is it to be rid of care?

SHAKSPEARE.

On the marquess's quitting him, De Vere's first impulse was to be himself the bearer of the tidings of his success to his mother. But his mother was with Constance, and Constance he was absolutely afraid to see.

"No!" said he, "my visit would be one of triumph, of insult; and sooner would I personally carry the news of my defeat."

Exclusive of this, he had a thousand people to see, a thousand matters of business to settle, and had Lady Eleanor been alone at Talbois, he scarcely could have left his post. He sat down, therefore, to write a long detailed account of the proceedings in court; which was much diverted, it must be owned, by long

digressions into his own feelings and views of futurity; and of these, he felt so little satisfied, that he was often tempted to renounce his task in despair. He finished it, however, and then liked it so little, that he tore it in pieces at the end of a full hour's work, and contented himself with a communication of scarcely greater length than a note.

Short as it was, it was all that his mother and cousin were destined to receive; for another plan of communication, devised by the kindness of Lord and Lady Clanellan, was rendered abortive by events to which we shall presently come.

The first lines of Mortimer's note, produced agitation in both ladies; for as they had no secrets, though of interests apparently so opposite, Lady Eleanor read it aloud.

"It has pleased Providence," said the note, "that Lord Cleveland should be defeated, and that we—oh! my dear mother, prepare yourself for a trial which, from my own feelings, I know will be a severe one."

Lady Eleanor immediately paused, and with concern exclaimed, "Does he then think defeat disappointment? And does he bear it so ill? Can this be De Vere? Can it be my son?"

"Judge him not too quickly," said Constance, "but proceed; my cousin will assuredly rise superior to any trial he can have."

She said this with an anxiety for the event, which proved that she too expected to undergo a trial, though it arose from any thing rather than fear about her fortune. When her aunt however resumed, and dropped her voice as she read, and her cheek became flushed, and her features moved, Constance with firmness cried out,

"Unfold this, whatever it be, my dear aunt. It is quite enough that Lord Cleveland has failed. For any thing else I am fully prepared."

"I know all your noble nature," replied Lady Eleanor; "but I own, with all our preparation, I expected not, as Mortimer himself says, that any one of our house should have struck this blow.—Ah! what injustice have I done my son!"

Constance, with unabated firmness, took the letter from her aunt's hand, and read as follows:

"Yes! the decree is in our favour; and it must be a trial to you, as well as to me, to think that we are the unwitting, and surely the unwilling instruments of rending (I still think

against justice, if not against law), the fairest part of her inheritance from such a being as Constance."

"And if I am to lose it," said Constance, cheerfully, "does he think I can repine—nay, that I do not even rejoice that you, my dear aunt, are to profit by it?"

"Were the thing clear!" answered her aunt, "but you see he thinks otherwise," and Lady Eleanor seemed much lost in the reflection.

Constance, however, went on.

"The thought," continued the letter, "is hateful to me, nor shall I ever rest till wrong is set right. It will be my heart's glory to repair this injustice. The world shall never say that I instigated this suit; that I am a calculating, deliberate invader, like Cleveland."

"Ah!" said Constance, overpowered, "I now see what he meant when he talked of the injustice of the world, and said he would take a noble revenge."

She hastily looked for more, but the letter was finished; it only added that Mortimer would write more at large the next day.

Contending emotions disabled both ladies from the farther communication of their thoughts, for Lady Eleanor was scarcely less

possessed. She, too, reflected upon the altered state of her son; and her first feeling upon it was to wonder, but with reverence, at the ways of Providence. She felt deeply for her niece; had a thousand doubts in the want of information, as to the realities of the case. She knew not what to believe, to think, or to wish. All that was certain was, that while she participated his feelings, she was filled with admiration at the designs of her son. Ever was he generous and noble-minded, thought she; ever above a suspicion of selfishness; from his birth upwards have I honoured him, and how does he now deserve it!

Such was the mental, though silent reflection of this enviable mother; enviable, surely, in these sentiments, however romantic, perhaps foolish, and certainly impracticable, the designs which prompted them.

By a sort of tacit agreement these two amiable women now separated. It was even necessary—with such contending feelings, as well as such different interests—that each, for some minutes at least, should be alone.

Constance retired to her cabinet, and certainly the crisis she was in was such as a young woman is seldom destined to undergo. It was of a na-

ture different at least from what most young women *do* undergo. Love, the universal passion, the usual causer of the agitations which young persons feel, was not here in question; or, if it was, it was under a shape very different from that which it generally assumes. Filial anxiety, the next distinguishing, and perhaps most respectable source of an unmarried woman's interest, was no longer the source of uneasiness. Ambition, which has oftener rendered the sex hateful than amiable; and personal rivalry, which has too often rendered it ridiculous; these were not here. Yet, for all this, the interest was powerful, and the thirst for information intense.

We have described Constance as not insensible to the elegancies and superiorities of life, and the loss of above half her means of enjoying them, was, perhaps, not unthought of. But she was still more alive to other and more noble considerations. Wealth, which had hitherto done every thing for her senses, and nothing for her heart, had failed too pointedly as an instrument of happiness, to make her consider its diminution as a very sore evil.

Then, as to the appropriation of the fortune she had lost, it was consolation to think that

the person she most feared and most disliked had been defeated in his attempt; while he on whom, for his virtues (to say nothing of other pretensions), she would willingly have bestowed half that fortune (could he have accepted it), now succeeded to it as his own. However all this might be, although, when she surveyed the vast precinct of her domain, she shewed some anxiety as to her future power of supporting its magnificence, yet it as often subsided into resignation; till at length she settled into that calm dignity, of which it was not easy for any change of circumstances to deprive her.

Her thoughts, however, were much in London, and the day lingered slowly, from the want of those details which it was expected the next morning's post would furnish. Nor was expectation disappointed; the amplest letters arrived, both from Lord Clanellan and De Vere, and each lady retired with her respective packet to her chamber.

Never was report so devoured as that of Lord Clanellan. And it deserved to be so; for though the subject was intricate, the clearness of Lord Clanellan made it easy, and his report was fidelity itself. The whole court, therefore, rose before the imagination of Constance; the inge-

nuity of counsel; the arguments of the judge; the interest of the bystanders; the sympathy she had inspired; the execration of Cleveland, and the admiration of De Vere! All these by turns affected her powerfully, and she felt kindly grateful to her own advocate for the manner of his defence. But when she came to the conduct of De Vere, and the speech of his counsel, made by his instruction, she could no longer restrain her feelings, but gave way to them in a torrent of tenderness, in which the real event of the cause was thrown far into shade, and her own great loss entirely forgotten.

Luckily for her, no meddling neighbour or officious menial, no scandal-loving visitor, or even Miss Mellilot herself, surprised her in this overpowering moment. Had they done so, these precious tears, which arose from fulness of gratitude (may we not add of affection?) alone, would every one of them, as they fell, have been set down to the effects of a reverse which she was not able to bear. Not all the tender nature of Constance; not her sensibility to generous treatment; not her own perfect disinterestedness, nor estimation of it in others; could ever have cleared her from this imputation, had such an accident happened. Such is

the world; and yet, as upon more occasions than one we have asserted, it is, upon the whole, a good world. But for all this, I am glad the accident did not happen.

It was full an hour before she saw any one; and then only, when ringing for a servant, she sent her guardian's packet to Lady Eleanor.

Lady Eleanor was instantly, and almost as much absorbed as her niece. She, too, was affected with the conduct of her son, and felt a lofty sort of joy to find it had been so approved. But her sympathy for the adverse fate of Constance, gave her no shock. In which if any one imagine it was because she felt herself of the winning party, little fit is it that he contemplate these characters. Yet much did she rejoice in the event for De Vere. "It will give him," said she proudly, "a right to assert the desire of his heart."

To do this she thought was enough; for besides her having for some time past suspected that Constance, even without being wooed, was not indifferent to her son, no woman, she thought, who really was wooed by him, could fail of being won.

These attached relations now again met, each of them more composed. Lady Eleanor's last

notion gave her an air of even unusual fondness towards Constance, who felt it almost as much as if she had divined its cause. But she set it down to her aunt's concern for her, nor rejected it the less because it arose, as she thought, from sympathy.

"And yet, my dear aunt," said she, "you must not suppose I stand in need of comfort, because I am not to enjoy that, which it is plain, whatever Mortimer may think, never was designed for, and therefore never belonged to me. But even if it had, and I had lost it, what has wealth done for me, but increase my cares? From the first, I felt that I should not know how to use it; and while it was only expected, to how many trials did it expose me? But it is ridiculous to talk of being indifferent to wealth, with this castle over my head. If I want to moralize, I should go to the Dairy House."

She said this cheerfully, and to the Dairy House she went.

Never did its modest elegance look so pleasing, its garden so neat, its brook so tranquil. She threw herself into a chair, courted all its sights and sounds, and passed full an hour in silent reverie, in which the past was given to oblivion, and the present, or rather the immediate future,

far from darkening in its prospect, floated in airy vision through her mind. And if in this visionary contemplation, the associations inspired by the place took possession of her, and she thought much of her cousin; if she afterwards ran rapidly through all their intercourse together; and, though she could fix upon little positive to prove that he loved her, if she found still less to shew that he was indifferent; if, with all her modesty, she did this, I say, let those blame her, if they can, who, being as pure, are, at the same time, as natural.

In this absorbing, though quiet occupation, her interest was only changed, not diminished by this visit to her pleasant retreat. The minutes seemed to fly; nor do we know how long she would have remained thus, had not a servant sought her to say, that an avant courier had arrived from Lady Clanellan, announcing that she would be at the castle to dinner. This was news that could not be neglected; but it dissipated a reverie in which some trouble mingled itself with sweetness, but in which the sweetness greatly predominated.

CHAPTER XVI.

POLITICAL CHANGE.

I'll never care what wickedness I do,
If this man comes to good.

SHAKSPEARE.

WE come now to very different matters. The affection which Lord and Lady Clanellan bore their ward, would not let them rest, from the moment of the decision of the court, until they had resolved to join her at Castle Mowbray. To be sure every thing in the shape of information, had been given by the marquess in his ample dispatch: but on conversing with his wife, this was not deemed enough by either.

"She will not need us, as supports," said Lady Clanellan, "but there are a thousand little explanations—a thousand tacit attentions, which she will feel as comforts; to say nothing of plans for the future, on which she may want to consult us."

"You speak like yourself, Caroline," said the marquess, "and we will set off as soon as you can get ready."

"That may be this evening," replied the marchioness; "we can sleep on the road, and we shall gain several stages."

"Which in a journey of friendship is gaining much," added the marquess. The marquess was, however, obliged to allow his lady to travel alone.

His trunks were already in the hall; the carriage ordered round, and himself giving some last directions, when a gentleman from Lord Oldcastle delivered him a note, entreating him to come to him on an affair with Lord Cleveland, of the last consequence. Incompatible as this was with his plan for Castle Mowbray, he could not refuse, especially as, considering the recent occurrence, and the character of the party, he thought it might relate to his own situation of guardian to Lady Constance. Settling therefore with Lady Clanellan that he would return as soon as possible, so as yet to leave town that night, he repaired with all speed to Lord Oldcastle.

What was his surprise to find that a storm had arisen from Lord Cleveland's quarter,

threatening the rupture of the administration itself, though taking its origin only in the private law suit to which he had just been a party.

We have related the outrageous insult given by Lord Cleveland, immediately after the decree was pronounced, to the great magistrate who had pronounced it. The high personal character of this judge could not brook such an affront, though his sense of the dignity of his place would not permit him personally to notice it. But he drove instantly to the king, and requesting an audience, laid before him the time, manner, and place of the outrage, and the occasion out of which it arose; and the whole statement, though perfectly faithful, contained little creditable to the character of Lord Cleveland.

The great personage to whom this appeal was made, yielded to no one in his dominions in respect for the laws, and the administrators of the laws; insomuch that it has sometimes, jocularly perhaps, but truly been said, that he had as much veneration for the constable's staff, as for the sceptre itself. More seriously, his own high, strict, and uniform sense of justice, was almost proverbial, so that if surnames were still a fashion in history, the JUST might be justly given to this ex-

emplary sovereign. Of all other minds, therefore, his was most open to impression from the facts laid before him. In the present instance, he promised to rebuke the offending party as he deserved, and he kept his promise.

Being one of the greatest officers of the crown, Lord Cleveland, notwithstanding the temper he was in, could not disobey a summons which was instantly sent to him, and to his astonishment, he had to sustain a sharp, though dignified reproach for his disrespect to the great functionary he had insulted, and not a little blame for his private conduct towards his orphan relation. Both censures fell the heavier upon him, from the immaculateness, on these, and indeed on all points, of the rebuking party.

Lord Cleveland knew he could set up no defence which could escape the penetration of his clear-sighted master; peculiarly clear as well as fervid and sincere in the moral code between man and man. But, exclusive of this, he could not reply upon his sovereign; and he left the closet, stung to the quick by censures which, while he felt they were deserved, were so far from humbling him, that he vowed revenge for the affront they had given to his pride, and this revenge he was resolved to

wreak that instant upon the author of his mortification. His resentment was so vehement that he related the affair, with his own colouring, to one or two nobles of the court, to whom he was so off his guard as to declare that he would resign his place unless the king made him an apology. He then sought and found Lord Oldcastle, to whom he complained bitterly of this conduct of their associate, whose instant dismissal he insisted upon; declaring that, if it was not complied with, he would himself resign, and pass with his whole force into the ranks of opposition.

We may suppose the alarm which this occasioned to a minister of the character of Lord Oldcastle. The feelings of the complaining party were too hot to admit of soothing, and his own habits of trimming, too well known to give room for cajolery. Ay or no was insisted upon; a profession of want of power, scouted; the impossibility of facing their common master with such a proposition, despised; the plea of the high character of the individual threatened, and his great and eminent services, laughed at.

"In short," said the earl, with an outward coolness, little according with the turbulence within, "you know my resolve in regard to

this man: to-morrow must decide for him or for me."

Lord Oldcastle was left mute with amazement. He consulted his son Eustace, who was in the house, and who gave him spirited advice, which he said he would consider; but he first resolved to confer with some of the leading friends of government, and particularly those who happened to be ranged with Lord Cleveland, under the title of king's friends. In the first rank of these was Lord Clanellan, and hence the summons we have just related.

We may suppose the wonder of the marquess at the news communicated to him; and he was not the less moved by it from the consideration that he was here again about to meet Lord Cleveland as an opponent. He, however, gave his opinion with the clear firmness which belonged to him, and it was, that Lord Cleveland's terms should not be complied with. "The injustice of them would alone," said he, "sway me to this;" an argument which did not entirely convince Lord Oldcastle; but when he added that if Lord Cleveland executed his threat, it would ruin him with his master for ever, the minister confessed there was much in the advice.

The conference lasted, and prevented the departure of Lady Clanellan for Castle Mowbray that night; and as Lord Oldcastle had entreated the marquess not to be absent from London till this vital affair was settled, he immediately acceded to the proposal of his kind-hearted wife, that she should not lose time in visiting her young friend; and promising to follow, he allowed her to set out alone.

The next day was big with importance, I had almost said with fate, to Lord Oldcastle. For, far from waiting quiescently for the effects of Lord Cleveland's threat, his great law coadjutor, upon being informed of it, immediately tendered his own resignation unless Lord Cleveland was himself dismissed. Every eye, therefore, was turned upon this crisis, which could not be concealed, with all the different interests which the different passions of hope, fear, revenge, and ambition, could inspire.

It was now that Lord Oldcastle shewed himself decidedly unequal to his situation. Within his own camp was mutiny; without, an active and pressing enemy: for Wentworth, who had never given him rest, profited by this weakness to assail him with all his force. It was evident he was falling, and many were the desertions.

Having decided for his law colleague, he delayed imparting the decision; and when he did impart it, found it was too late. The great functionary was already in treaty with Mr. Wentworth, with whose principles he entirely agreed; while, on the other hand, the same delay had produced the resignation of Cleveland. Every thing was confusion, hopelessness, and terror; and Lord Oldcastle, rather than be dashed to pieces in the storm, resigned the helm.

Nothing could be more ill-timed than all this, for the views, the hopes, and the wishes of De Vere. He was impatient; he panted to get to Castle Mowbray, but he had already found that he had become a man of too much consequence to be his own master. The Yorkshire estates to which he had succeeded, conferred all the political influence which had belonged to Lord Mowbray. As this was known, he was courted on all sides, and his table was covered with the cards of men, many of them of the first consideration, who came to congratulate and renew their acquaintance with him. Among these was the name of William Flowerdale, and (believe it who will) that of William Clayton, which

last gave De Vere a feeling of sickness when he saw it.

And yet, but for the supremeness of the contempt in which De Vere held Clayton, he could now have viewed him with pity. Consummate as had been his disguises, a character like his could not for ever be concealed. He had smiled, and smiled, and yet by some was at last thought a villain. The world judges too often suddenly, and judges wrong; but in the end, it will judge rightly, when the truth is before it. The real treatment of De Vere by Clayton could not continue to be smothered as it had been. The free talk of Cleveland himself revealed it. In the plenitude and insolence of his power, he kept no measures with this unhappy dependant. He was in the habit of speaking contumeliously of serious things, and the gravest characters. Could he spare one for whom he had so little respect? He had a language of his own upon these occasions; and to call Clayton his man, his major domo, and sometimes his tool, and his time-server, was hazarded with as much impunity as effrontery.

The sensibilities of the secretary had become vapid and even ridiculous to every body; he met with no sympathy, and felt his bondage, but

could not break it, for he had not a pound in the world. Notwithstanding this misery, therefore, the resignation of his patron, although it released him from thraldom, was a cruel blow—crueller than it appeared. He had for some time given much of his attention to the subject of marriage. He considered it (not exactly as some visionary persons perhaps consider it, as a mean of happiness) but as an instrument of success in any pursuit you might be upon. The Parvenu at present, had not less than three; the possession of beauty, of wealth, and of high connection; all of them peculiarly to be promoted by marriage. Accordingly, three corresponding objects presented themselves to his wishes in the persons of three ladies. One, an amiable girl, had moved his susceptibility, and he might be said to be in love. But she had neither fortune nor rank, and his love was quelled. Another had riches, and he bowed at her shrine; but the shrine was in the city, and not even of the aristocratic part of it. He visited, indeed, in Bread Street, but always in secret, and liked it too little to repeat it often. A third was an earl's daughter, and though she was without fortune, and her father without power, his love of fashion prevailed, and he

was at least received into the family as a contingent good match. But the destruction of the ministry blew up his fortunes, and he was politely desired by his intended father-in-law, to discontinue his visits. He appealed to Lady Jane, but Lady Jane was too good a daughter to have a will of her own. He betook himself instantly to Cheapside, and renewed his advances, but his other treaty having been discovered, he met with a flat denial. Thus denuded, friendless, pennyless, hopeless, execrated by his inferiors, laughed at by his superiors, and despised by his equals, he ventured to appear before Lord Cleveland in one of his moodiest moments.

Being asked his business, in a tone little friendly, he came, he said, humbly to beg advice how he was to dispose of himself.

"Hang yourself," was the answer; "it is the only thing left you;" and the earl turned upon his heel.

"There is still my seat in parliament," said Clayton, almost trembling.

"Which you may keep for three weeks," replied his comforter. "It will take about that time to dissolve, which the new ministry

will of course determine upon, as soon as they are settled."

Clayton's heart sunk; his lip quivered, and, in sheer despair, he talked of hoping for some reward for service, and even stammered out (as is believed, for it is not certain) something about attachment. The misanthropy of the earl enjoyed this meanness; for he knew how much, as well as how justly he was detested by the practiser of it.

"My good Clayton," said he, in a tone indescribably ironical, "I agree with you, attachment ought to be rewarded, but I have not the means. If you really want reward for attachment, I would advise you to go to De Vere; he is grateful, and generous, and is now rich."

The measure of misery was full. The earl had torn Clayton's heart to pieces, as he himself had torn that of many others—his inferiors or confiding equals. He left the room without reply, and insolently as he had been treated, when he looked at his patron's fine hall on quitting it, and felt that he never should see it again, he actually shed tears.

With not much hope, he repaired to Lord Oldcastle, who said he was too busy to see him, and referred him to Mr. Grantley. Mr. Grant-

ley referred him to one of his clerks. Too proud, fallen as he was, to talk of his wants to one whom, in common with most others, he had made his enemy, he declined this last reference. He afterwards met Lord Oldcastle and Mr. Grantley in the park; but they crossed into another walk, and did not or would not look at him. He repaired to the House. But the House was thin; and the few who were there, were talking of the new minister, Mr. Wentworth. There was neither leisure, nor disposition to think of *him;* and the two or three scattered underlings whom he did meet, shunned him with coldness, as a follower of Lord Cleveland.

Thus cast off, and in the very lowest state of mortification, he felt banished and lonely, though in the midst of a crowd, and envied every busy, occupied face which he saw; while the sight of the carriages of his acquaintance, who rolled by him in evident indifference, gave him the cruellest pangs. As a last resource he left his name, as has been said, with De Vere—hoping little, expecting nothing—but he left it. Not finding him, he wrote him a short note, announcing first to him (as he said was but his duty), his intention to ask for the Chiltern

Hundreds, and vacate Wellsbury. He did this from a double motive. First, because he felt sure, in a few weeks at most, of being turned out; next, to make a merit of it with De Vere, whom it was now so much his interest to conciliate.

De Vere, whose disgust was irrecoverable, drily accepted the resignation, and a new election was soon impending.

The honest burghers of Wellsbury were stupified by the late events. The resignation and death of Lord Mowbray had not been much felt, while Clayton remained and represented a still greater man in Lord Cleveland. But the fall of this second patron, and the extinction of their old representation altogether, left them in amazement. The town clerk's (that is Lord Cleveland's) party were literally, to use their own expression, "dumb founded." They tried to make a stand, and the purse of Lord Cleveland would not have been wanting, had there been a reasonable prospect of success. But De Vere's late purchases, the returning attachment to his name, and above all the change of government, had so strengthened his party, as to prove to the prudent earl, that he had no chance whatever, and he therefore very wisely cut off the supplies. The town clerk made a

journey to London to alter his resolution if he could. He was received with bare civility, and shewing some symptoms of rebellion (being as we have observed, of a sturdy, churlish disposition) was turned out of doors. This would never have happened, had not the calculating earl proved to himself that he never more could have footing in the borough. He therefore felt full license to deal with a subaltern instrument as it listed him, and it listed him to make good that terrifying axiom of criminal ambition—

> "Know, villains, when such paltry slaves presume
> To mix in treason, if the plot succeeds
> They're thrown neglected by;—but if it fails,
> They're sure to die like dogs, as you shall do."

Mr. Blakeney vowed revenge, but could not help himself, and after perseveringly beating up for a volunteer candidate, fairly offered himself to De Vere, who gave him a peremptory refusal. It is needless to add, that De Vere was elected without opposition; a success which gave him the more solid pleasure, because, from his still fostered feelings with regard to the Cleveland estates, the doubt which hung over that brilliant acquisition, secret as it might be to the world, still paralyzed many of his resolutions.

As to Clayton, not wishing too often to return to a disagreeable subject, we will here close his eventful career. Every hope in public life had passed by him from the decline of his favour with Lord Cleveland, who, as we have seen, had used and left him; so that he was literally starved into an application for bread to some of his relations whom he had grossly neglected. Whether to revenge this, or from ignorance in his benevolence, one of them, a broker in the city, offered to take him into partnership. The notion almost drove him mad, and he shrank from it to consult Roebuck, the political printer. Roebuck advised him to attend the gallery of the House of Commons, and report debates. This was ten times worse. At length he made an offer of his services, as a tutor for his children, to a fashionable banker, to whom he had once shewn some official civility; and who, on learning his situation, accepted and established him in his house. There he thought he could at least share a life of opulence, and live still amidst good company. But unlooked-for mortifications awaited him, worse than any he could have foreseen. His patron moved in the very focus of that society in which Clayton had shone (or thought he had shone) as an equal, or higher than an equal.

He was now to be content to mingle with them on sufferance; to stand unnoticed, where he had formerly taken a lead: and to be passed by, at first with compassionate recognition, at last in silent and total neglect. At table, where his business was only to carve, never to speak, he often saw the companions of his former life, still revelling in the sunshine of present honour and future hope. With these, however intimately he had formerly mixed with them, he felt that he was to mix no more; nor could he even bear their discourse, which was on the subjects of his former glory, the great state parties, the assemblies of fine people, and the marriages of fashionable beauties. This was always sure to send him away in bitterness, to reminiscence, and misery; and the aristocratic stiffness of Mr. Freshville, and the Misses Partridge, who, on learning his situation, entirely let him drop, cost him several nights' sleep. At length a baleful envy seized upon his heart, which sickened to its core. He balanced about giving up what was now his only chance for bread, but his daily misery conquered, and he resigned his charge, which his patron did not press him to retain. As a last resource, he threw himself upon the charity of De Vere, who refused to admit him

to his presence, but relieved his immediate necessity, and at last obtained for him a small place in the Excise, in a distant port in Scotland. There, amidst the fumes of herring, ling, and tobacco, which it was his wretched duty to supervise, and in the society of men as polished, to use a phrase of Congreve, as a Dutch skipper from a whale fishery, he lingered out a mortified existence. For there, without that last clinging comfort of the virtuous unfortunate, which misfortune itself cannot take from them, a sense that their lot is undeserved, and will be recompensed hereafter, he dreamt (and perhaps still dreams) away life in unhappy recollections of the past, only made more bitter from a contrast with the present.

Let no one suppose that these details are without their use. In the world there always are, and always will be, some instances of what may be called successful villany; but a gentlemanly honour pervades by far the greater number of those with whom Clayton had attempted to make his way, and who, in the language of the old admonitory column at Talbois,

> "Most of all eschew,
> To trust in Parvenu."

This honour will, sooner or later, assert itself, and the false friend and time-serving hypocrite may surely reckon upon being ultimately discovered. But still more useful is this history for the lesson it affords, that an ill-disciplined mind, influenced by a bad ambition, is always made the instrument of its own punishment, though it never can suffice to its own recovery.

CHAPTER XVII.

MINISTERIAL CARE.

But in a gross brain, little wots
What watch the king keeps to maintain the peace
Whose hours the peasant most advantages.

SHAKSPEARE.

Your grace shall pardon me ;
I am too high born to be property'd ;
To be a secondary at controul,
Or useful serving man.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE appointment of Mr. Wentworth to the ministry, gave an entire new face to the political world. High matters were in agitation, fraught with nothing less than a nation's weal; and perhaps there could not be a prouder point of pre-eminence than that on which Mr. Wentworth stood. It is the observation of D'Alembert that high office is like a pyramid: only two sorts of animals reach the top—reptiles, and eagles. Mr. Wentworth was, at least, no reptile. He had scarcely ever served in subordinate office; he had always disdained what is called a patron,

and from his entry into parliament, he burst forth ten thousand strong. To the present height and summit of his fortune, he had advanced, impelled by all the motives which could really make ambition virtue; a sincere love of country; a perfect disinterestedness, and a most ineffable contempt for all mean arts in the acquisition of power. He had advanced from his personal qualities and abilities alone; he represented no great families; and was the organ of no anomalous oligarchy that sought to controul the king. At the same time, he had advanced through the favour of the nation at large, as well as of his sovereign. By this, we do not mean what is vulgarly called the people; but that which is really so, the majority of all ranks, forming a happy amalgamation of the numerous parties which had hitherto divided and afflicted the state. The necessity for new maxims of government had long been felt; and those who agreed in nothing else, agreed in this, that a sincere regeneration was absolutely wanting, to save the country from the progress of a corruption which was extending to its vitals. Mr. Wentworth thus seemed to unite all suffrages, in the hope which was now entertained, that he was destined to the accomplishment of this happy work. Proud and

enviable situation! the holder of which is the real darling of history, before whom Cæsar and Alexander sink to nothing.

We may suppose how much Wentworth's appointment rejoiced the patriotic spirit of De Vere. It must be owned, however, that a time might have been found more opportune for that spirit to display itself. In truth, as we have said, he sickened, he panted to be at Talbois, and had almost shaken off his lawyers, when this critical event imprisoned him for some time longer.

Exclusive of his warm intimacy with the new minister, and all his zeal for the country, which this appointment kindled anew, the late decision had made De Vere a man of immense consequence in the political world. This circumstance did not create, but it certainly did not diminish the desire of the new minister to number him among his public supporters, as well as his private friends. He, indeed, wrote to him a very few hours after he had quitted the closet, and his note proves how little necessary it is that because a man is a minister, he should forget that he is a friend.

After acquainting De Vere with his appointment, "I little thought," said he, "that our

Pyrenean dreams might be realized; or, at least, so soon. Come to me, I beseech you; for, far from being elated, I am heavy, and alarmed, and want your support. I know where your heart is, and how mean all this must appear to 'Signor Love;' but come to me, even though she may expect you, and your foot be in the stirrup."

De Vere's foot was not in the stirrup, nor did he know that he was expected; but his heart was where Wentworth thought it. The news, however, which was announced, was too auspicious for him to refuse such a summons, and a few minutes placed him by the side of his friend.

He found him different from what most would have expected, considering his new-born greatness. For though he had an excited air, it was rather serious and determined, than elevated or joyous. He had been pleased with his reception by the king, and he had a mountain of letters before him, all containing congratulations and professions, some of them, however, accompanied by conditions which did not please him.

"That I should acquaint you, among the first, with this event," said he, "is but natural; and this I should have done, had you been still

the same powerless but high-minded De Vere, who, however disposed to turn shepherd himself, would not let me do so. But the situations of both are altered, and the Pyrenean vallies, and Rivers, and Zerlina, and even Lady Constance, must be forgotten for a time, in a very different scene. The country needs us, and we must obey."

De Vere was expressing his pleasure at the new prospect that was opening, when Wentworth continued—

"And yet I feel, I know not what sort of alarm, at the difficulties that present themselves to a man who is determined to rest upon his principles, rather than upon management, for success. Upon your own support I know I can rely, because it is upon those principles, setting aside our friendship, that alone I ask it."

"This is as it should be," said De Vere, "and whatever power I may have (for I scarcely yet know what it is), you may suppose you do not confide in it in vain."

"*Pro me*," replied Wentworth, with great emphasis (for his seriousness seemed to increase), "*Pro me, si recte agam, sin aliter in me.*"

"Agreed," answered De Vere, "and may the government of every minister be like that of the great man* who uttered that sentiment."

"Yet Lord Oldcastle would think it visionary," said Wentworth, "and Walpole would despise it, as wanting in knowledge of the world. I am told, too, that your old friend and Nestor, Sir William Flowerdale, shakes his head, 'and by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,' augurs nothing good of the expected new system. He has even talked of retiring, which I am sorry for, but perhaps from your intimacy, you know all this."

"I am ashamed to say how long it is since I have seen him," replied De Vere; "but I will seek him out; his remarks may be of use."

"Try him," said Wentworth, "and tell him how much I wish his help where he is, and if you break no confidence, make report. At any rate, I am determined to try their boasted tact by another touchstone. I will at least make the momentous experiment, and prove whether a whole nation can be so plunged in corruption, as not to be governed, except by the corrupt."

"This too is as it should be," said De Vere.

* The Emperor Trajan.

"And yet, my friend," returned Wentworth, with earnestness, "I am myself almost appalled at what I have undertaken; for whatever people may think, or write, of the selfishness of ambition, what I feel at this moment tells me it is a very different thing."

"I believe you," said De Vere, observing Wentworth seriously moved.

"And you are one of the very few men," said Wentworth, "whom *I* would believe, when they told me that they believed *me* on such a subject. For how many flatterers would say the same, and yet feel sure that I sought for power solely for my own purposes."

"They can only be of the common herd, who would think so, at least if they knew you;" said De Vere.

"And yet," said Wentworth, "how few but those who have themselves borne the burthen, know what they encounter, when they undertake a nation's welfare: what difficulties there are to manage; what parties to please; what jars to reconcile, spirits to assuage, and combinations to disarm. Even our friends sometimes weigh us down, by the very acts which they intend should support us. What mischiefs did the Tory government of Queen Anne,

experience from the Tories themselves?* Even envy lurks among these friends, and, sooner or later, like a serpent among flowers, stings us to death while in seeming security."

De Vere felt this from his own experience, and was much moved with the earnestness of the complaint, which he allowed was but too well founded.

"If it is so," said Wentworth, "what, in the way of self-interest, can compensate, to a minister, the total sacrifice of his ease, his health, and private mind, to the welfare of a country which can only be thus secured?"

"If honour, and real love of that country will not do it," replied De Vere, "I know not what will. Certainly the emoluments you ministers are supposed to covet, never will."

"How truly have you answered;" said Wentworth. "And yet it is for these emoluments, these 'rascal counters,' that we are supposed to covet the dangers, the strifes, and turmoils of our struggling lives. For these, and these only, it is thought that we watch, while others sleep; that we are anxious, while others laugh; that we bend under responsi-

* Particularly by the Otober Club.

bility, while others trip lightly and cheerily on their way."

Here the conversation paused, for Wentworth seemed still occupied with his reflections, nor would De Vere interrupt him, for he was really struck with this unexpected ebullition in a man so ardent. Wentworth therefore went on:

"This malignant, this scandalous injustice," said he, "startles me still more, now that I have achieved, from motives (as to you I can say it) the most opposite of all this, what the black and disappointed spirits of the land will be let loose upon me to assail with calumny. May I not then feel alarmed, and exclaim with him who knew every part of our nature so well—

"O! hard condition! twin-born with greatness,
Subjected to the breath of every fool,
Whose sense no more can feel but his own wringing!
What infinite heart's-ease must kings neglect
That private men enjoy!"

"Come," said De Vere, "this is not the way I had expected that the minister of a nation's wishes would have received his appointment; and did I not feel that it is the mere cloud of a moment, I should tremble for what is so like despondency."

"No!" returned Wentworth, "I will not despond, with the support of such men as yourself, and the reward which no one can take from me—a sense of that honour and love of country which you mentioned just now. This is, in fact, the only real encouragement of true ambition. For while our power is assailed, our motives misrepresented, our characters blackened, and our very persons sometimes hated, and all, while toiling for the public good, what treasure in the shape of gold, what real reward can make up for it, save only honour."

De Vere was really moved with this sincere burst of feeling in the new minister, who, however, felt relieved by it, and began to brighten.

"Come," said he, "it is past; the cloud is gone, and we will look only to the better side of things. One of my best comforts will be to have you near me, in my arduous undertaking. You promised to fight by my side as soon as you were free to do it. You are so now, and I expect you to perform your promise."

"How can I help you?" asked De Vere.

"By placing yourself in office."

"I would rather be your country gentleman, and give you support out of it."

"I expected as much," said Wentworth.

"But I want the credit of your name, where most it will give me credit. I want it not to be said, as it too often is of a minister's friends, that they support him like the Swiss, merely for pay."

"I approve your principle," said De Vere, "but fear I am selfish enough to resist it. For a high and commanding office, I have not experience enough to be fit; for a subordinate one, to register mandates at a board, or be the mere depository of a great man's confidence, who is, as he ought to be, above consulting you, and only confides in you as a safe machine; this, though absolutely necessary in itself, would not, I own, be agreeable to me."

"I own too," said Wentworth, smiling, "that I have made a mistake. I forgot I was talking to the proudest man in England; and whose pride withal is not lessened by having just stepped into ten thousand a year."

De Vere shook his head, and became in his turn exceedingly thoughtful; nay, so absent, that Wentworth began to wonder what sudden uneasiness had come over him. In fact, De Vere was thinking of the little intention, if not the little right he had to retain this ten thousand a year, could he dispose of it as his heart wished.

"Have I not enough interest with you," at last said Wentworth, "to win you to be always near me, in our relation of friends, rather than of chief and second."

"Yes," replied De Vere, "but chief and second must then be abolished between us, which it would not be were I to be clothed with any character. In short, *malim ut de me quærant homines, quam ob rem Catoni non sit posita statua, quam quare sit posita.** I will, therefore, be as near you as you please, as your independent supporter; but, count upon it, whatever service you think I can do you, it will be better done by shewing my deference to you as a friend, than as a master."

"I think you mistake this matter," said Wentworth. "It is only in the recesses of office, the daily and hourly ingress to which is not only natural, but necessary to one in an official capacity, that you can be to me what I want. As the great independent you choose to be, you will and must be comparatively aloof. You may give me a little grace now and then when I want it in the House, but the *substan-*

* I would rather that men inquired why a statue was not erected to Cato, than why it was.

tial comfort I look to out of it, will be to seek. We shall have no departmental business, bringing us always together; our intimacy, though not cooled, may yet be interrupted; we shall first wonder that we so seldom meet, and at last grow reconciled to not meeting at all."

"Is this then," asked De Vere, alarmed, "the character of friendship among public men?"

"It is, at least, too often the fact," replied Wentworth.

"I will think of it," said De Vere, and he took a cordial leave.

He hastened to Flowerdale, whom he had scarcely seen since he returned from France, and whom he found in his office-room, arranging and destroying papers, examining some with care, classing others, delivering many to clerks, and tearing many. There was an air about him of careful attention to the business he was upon.

Always, however, glad to see De Vere, he received him with apparent pleasure; though we are not sure that his manner was not marked with somewhat more formality, certainly more deference and consideration than usual. Whether this was owing to the secret respect, which a change from very moderate to very rich circumstances almost always occasions, or whether it

was the accession of De Vere's particular friends to power, we have not divined. There was, however, no meanness in the baronet's civility, and he appeared the same mild, sensible, and collected person as ever.

He would have talked of the decree, but found it unpalatable, for De Vere avoided the conversation. "We will wait," said he, "to see what time will ultimately determine."

Sir William thought he meant that Lord Cleveland intended to appeal, and asked as much, but De Vere undeceived him.

"He is at least in a miserable mortified state," said Sir William, "having quarrelled with his sovereign, out of sheer insolence, broke up the whole government out of revenge, and all growing out of an avaricious injustice, for which he is universally blamed, if not despised."

"I come not to talk of him," said De Vere. "I would much rather talk of yourself, and ask, if I may, whether what I have heard be true, that you mean to withdraw from the new ministry, the benefit of your services."

"Of course," said Sir William, with an air of cautious curiosity, "I must not ask who was your informant?"

"I can scarcely say I have been informed, when I have only heard a report."

"And the reporter?"

"Mr. Wentworth himself."

Sir William's countenance, placid as it was, became instantly a little clouded; and something like colour came into his cheek. But he checked it, and resumed his usual undisturbed air.

"Does this report then trouble you?" asked De Vere. "If so, I hope it is not true."

"To say it *troubles* me, is perhaps too much," replied the baronet. "Me, who have been so long in office, and seen so many strange revolutions, that though none ought to surprise me, it is very fit I should retire, and make way for others, as may be wished. Indeed, I have long felt that I have had enough of official life. I have seen and outlived most of the great men, and it is even time I should retire."

"Has any *wish* then been signified to you to this effect?" asked De Vere.

"Not precisely," answered Sir William; "but there are *indications* fully equal to a direct *signification*. Mr. Wentworth not being yet installed, can hardly have demanded my office; but there is a whispering gallery at the treasury,

as well as at St. Paul's; and the universal sweep to be made, is perfectly well known. I can only hope that the new system intended to be adopted may prosper."

"And may I ask, as you have formerly permitted me, your opinion upon this new system?"

"It is not for me," replied Sir William, "who have no share in it, to pretend even to know enough of it to form an opinion."

The baronet here became suddenly occupied with some papers which he had before him, and seemed evidently to wish to retire from the subject.

"We are formal together," said De Vere. "This is not the way we used to meet."

"You are a different man," replied his friend, "and stand no longer in need of the only thing I had to give, lessons of experience. Nay," added he, with a bow, in which there was a mixture of real deference, with assumed form, "I know not that I may not be talking to one of my masters."

De Vere could not help smiling at his caution, but assured him it was not so. "I wish not, however," said he, "to force confidence, though I have such high hopes from the new order of things, that I should like still to have

the opinion of a person who so well understood the old one."

"I most sincerely wish it may answer," replied Sir William; "and that the new maxim, of measures not men, may succeed. I, however, allow," added he, with some constraint of countenance, "that to give it the best chance for success, Mr. Wentworth is but right in contemplating the universal change which it seems he means to make of all the old office men."

"Yourself among them?" asked De Vere.

Sir William's features, schooled as they were to an habitual and prudent tranquillity, could not help discovering curiosity at this speech. In fact, the interest was as earnest as habitual self-possession could permit, and he fairly asked De Vere his meaning. The latter, who had no concealments of his own, when opening a frank communication with another, as fairly told him that he had, only a few minutes before, heard Mr. Wentworth say that he *regretted* Sir William's intention of retiring.

"A man may do that," returned Sir William, rather gravely, "while he is accepting with pleasure the resignation he regrets."

"That did not appear to me," said De Vere.

"May I ask what did appear?"

"A real wish that you would continue where you are; and, in fact, an express desire, which I was even commissioned to communicate, that Mr. Wentworth might continue to receive your assistance, in your present department."

"That, at least, contradicts what I had heard," observed Sir William, evidently changing, "for I was told he had said that my place would be particularly wanted, and that I was too much wedded to the old school, to make it safe to leave me."

"And but for this, then, you would not have thought of retiring?" said De Vere.

"The case would have been altered," answered his friend.

"And may I ask your informant?"

"As he was not correct, it is of little consequence," said Sir William.

Here a pause ensued. There was evidently, however, less constraint in the baronet's manner. His features became more open, and his eye more placid; which De Vere observing, he frankly said,—

"As you are, then, one of his government, may I not now ask your opinion of Mr. Wentworth's plan of administration?"

"I have not the real facts sufficiently before me," replied the Nestor, after deliberation, "to enable me to give an answer. I have been informed, indeed, that all which was formerly called management is to be abandoned; that influenced majorities are not to be attempted; contracts, loans, and lottery-tickets never to be thought of; so that, the disgraceful maxim of the old duke, that it was cheaper to buy the elected than the electors, is to be reprobated; while influence in the elections themselves is also to be scouted. Thus the whole government is to rest for its basis upon the wisdom and publicity of its measures, and the purity of its conduct alone."

"And can you form no opinion upon all this?"

"I, at least, admire it," said Sir William, "and hope the best, as I shall certainly continue to do. But, as an old observer, I cannot but remember former maxims of very able, though, perhaps, you may call them very diplomatic men, who held that the public have passions to be moved, but no reason to be appealed to; and that while *truth* may move half a score of men in a nation, or an age, *mystery* will lead millions by the nose."

"Your authority is Bolingbroke," said De Vere, "always, on all subjects, too passionate, and blinded by his personal feelings, not to be questionable."

"He was, however," replied Sir William, "nursed among the characters he thus describes, and his opinions (without meaning to say they are mine) have their supporters among the experienced of the present day."

"And what may these experienced people think?" said De Vere.

"They have the presumption," said Sir William, "to say, that Mr. Wentworth goes a century at least before the people he is to govern; and they prophecy that his government will not, because it cannot stand. Nay, they boldly assert, that the House of Commons and the people themselves will be the first to call for a return to the old order."

"And do you approve these notions?"

"That I do not say. There are, to be sure, extremes in every thing; but I should be sorry to be among those who say that it is possible for a minister to be too honest."

"'Tis a sentiment as unfounded as wicked," cried De Vere, "and I am sorry the system has not more of your favour. It is certain that both

things and men are changed, since the days of your oracle, Bolingbroke."

"I beg not to be misunderstood," replied Sir William. "The new system never was out of favour with me. Though hazardous, I think it worthy the patriotic mind that conceived it; and, with the firmness and ability of Mr. Wentworth, I really hope it may be brought to perfection."

"Hope and *think*, are different things," said De Vere. "What is your thought?"

"I think, then," answered the baronet, feeling pushed, "that in such able hands, it may succeed. Under older politicians, I am sure it would not."

"And may I tell this to Mr. Wentworth?"

"Certainly."

The conversation ended, the friends parted, and De Vere telling him he should hear from him again, Sir William gave orders to return all the papers he was examining, to their old pigeon-holes, from which some of them had not stirred for thirty years. He then coolly walked into the park; and nobody, from his countenance, could gather whether he was in or out.

A second visit from De Vere found the Nestor greatly changed. He said that all eyes were

now turned on Mr. Wentworth with hope and even fondness; and that Lord Oldcastle, and the partizans of the old order were daily losing ground; that the combination of great families would give way, and the new æra be universally hailed.

De Vere observed that he had become infinitely more sanguine, and that all his old frankness with him had returned. Sir William, however, wondered to see De Vere yet unplaced.

"And is not the place of Mr. Wentworth's friend, as honourable as office?" asked De Vere.

"As honourable, but yet not so useful; and if you wish to take part in public affairs, more than as a mere member of parliament—"

"*Mere* member of parliament," cried De Vere; "what character so noble, so useful to England, as an honest English country gentleman?"

"An honest English secretary of state," said Flowerdale. "But without going so high, an apparently very little person, who is able and sincere, and from office, is admitted behind the scenes, is often of more real use and consequence to England than the country gentlemen of half a dozen counties. I will not describe these, as they were once called, *placidum pecus*; on the

contrary, many are enlightened and more will be so, as the country advances, and education extends. But a man whose greatest or only glory is to hunt his fox, and rail against *Germany*, will set up his acres in vain, with a view to raise the estimation of his character, or even of his consequence, in comparison with those who lead, or ably follow in the administration of the nation's interests."

"You talk," said De Vere, "as if you had lately been studying the English squirehood, or reading that delightful book which paints the flower of it, Squire Western."

"That race," said Flowerdale, "is, thank heaven, fast dying away, and in a few years will be no more. But though our posterity may be more polished Nimrods, and some of them, too, will have weight in the greatest national affairs; yet, speaking generally, the influence of the state will always belong to those who do the business of the state. If I might advise, therefore, though you are Mr. Wentworth's friend, you will also be his coadjutor."

"And where would you place me?" asked De Vere, to try him.

"Not *any* where," answered Flowerdale, smiling; "for some situations you are too

proud; for others too modest; but, above all, I would not place you where what you saw might bring your good opinion of men into hazard. The town, indeed, is, as you know, still talking of what was lately said to the French king, by a traveller who pretends to be a philosopher."

"And what was that?"

"*Pour estimer les hommes, il faut être ni confesseur, ni ministre, ni lieutenant de police.*"

De Vere laughed, and asked if the king made no reply?

"A pointed one," said Flowerdale, for he added, "*Ni Roi.*"

"This man apprehends things passing shrewdly," said De Vere to himself, when he left him. "It is certain, too, we all belong to our country, and ought to serve it; but am I yet at my own disposal?"

The thought was embarrassing, and he wandered in agitation far away from official haunts and official subjects; and, these interviews over, he gave himself up more than ever to dreams which had any thing for their object but political ambition, and which, could they be realized, romance itself might have envied him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOMETHING VERY JEALOUS.

Tell her, my love, more noble than the world,
Prizes not quantity of dirty lands.

SHAKSPEARE.

Too long have we been detained from that story of tenderness which we now resume, although it would not be without pleasure that we dwelt some little longer upon that high and honour-stirring field of ambition which now opened to Wentworth and his band of friends. This band was daily increasing, for its leader had bought "golden opinions from all sorts of people." As to De Vere, with whom he had one or two other fruitless interviews, he at last fairly told him to get him gone to Castle Mowbray, for he should have no good of him till he had been there. We may suppose how readily De Vere obeyed.

We may suppose, too, that long previous to his arrival, the wonders which had been passing in town were known to the lovely lady of that castle, and her now only companion, Lady Eleanor; for Lady Clanellan had returned to her lord, after some few days visit. But the packets of the marquess kept the party informed of every thing.

The letters of De Vere to his mother were more close. His romantic design in favour of his cousin was not abandoned, though much weakened, as we have seen, by the argument of Lord Clanellan, that his offer, if made, would not be accepted Of all those feelings of his heart which spoke gentleman to all who knew him, one of the most jealous was that which made him shrink from any thing that could be called *display*. If this was true in regard to meaner things, what was it on a point on which he was the most sensitive—his love for Constance? That love was made up of such perfect, such entire esteem, united with such delicate, as well as admiring affection, that though he could have shed his blood for her if necessary, he would have died rather than have professed it.

Nevertheless, his impulse towards restitution

would not quit his mind, where his cousin reigned in all her sweetness, and all her glory. No business, however urgent, no advantages, however obvious, could detach him from an interest which every day grew more absorbing. The political changes that had happened had delayed, but not altered him; and, at length, unable to bear his feelings any longer, he stole secretly away, and did not stop till he arrived at the Fox.

This little inn, at the foot of Castle Mowbray hill, we presume is not forgotten by the reader. Here, however, De Vere was seized by a thousand misgivings as to his reception, which prevented him from going farther. Indeed there seemed a spell set upon this little inn; for never had he been there without experiencing some emotion, some interest of consequence to his heart. He wrote therefore to his mother, previously to visiting the castle.

"Why, I am here," said he, "I scarcely know myself, except that I was too restless in London to remain *there*. Yet now I *am* here, I feel like a criminal, and dare not advance. I know not my situation with my poor and plundered Constance, and feel that the plunderer can do nothing but what I am doing, *lurk* about

these once loved precincts, till I know how I shall be received. I am bewildered with contending designs, which, ever since the decree, have robbed me of my peace. One, indeed, I had conceived, which gave a joy to my mind, but which was quickly dashed from it by Lord Clanellan; and yet upon that design I am more than ever fixed, if it be only feasible. For if Constance is not still to enjoy these estates, never shall I enjoy them myself. The wish of my heart therefore, is perfectly known to it; but how to bring it about, is what overpowers me. Yet if I offer to restore them, I am told I shall be refused; refused perhaps, as if I had also offered an insult to a delicacy which I would die sooner than wound.

"Thus am I tossed on a sea of doubt, from which I can only be relieved by one of two things, either that Constance will consent to repossess these estates, as an absolute sacrifice to justice; or, without any offer of restitution, that she will accept them from me in a very different capacity. Yet of this last, what is the hope? where the encouragement? You, whom I have never consulted without benefit, advise me, watch for me, act for me, say whether I may approach her, and what I may expect."

The tender confidence between Constance and her aunt, made it impossible for Lady Eleanor either to conceal that this letter had been received, or that it was fraught with even more than usual interest. But it was equally impossible at once to reveal its contents, and Constance remained long in an ignorance of them, which to her was mysterious. At another time she would have fairly asked to know them, but Constance was grown timid.

Lady Eleanor felt that she had a very critical part to act. If she laid De Vere's letter before her niece, which had almost been her first impulse, she ran the risk of, perhaps, a dangerous acceleration of his greater purpose. For whatever might have been her hope, she was by no means so sure of the inclinations of his cousin, as to justify what might end in a disappointment almost as bitter to herself as to him. But at any rate, by this disclosure she would immediately expose him to what he so much wished to avoid, the imputation that he attempted to derive merit with her, by a shew of generosity. Yet, to leave him utterly without assistance, after such a letter, was unmotherly, unkind; and she resolved to take the chances of a middle course, which, like most middle

courses, ended in no satisfaction. She resolved to *sound* her niece; a task for which she was utterly unfit. In truth, her mind was too high for any thing that might be called *management*; and far easier would it have been, and far more consonant to her own modes of action, to have laid the whole letter at once before Lady Constance; for as it turned out, she reaped nothing but discomfort from the best intentions in the world.

The fact of De Vere's arrival in the neighbourhood, could not be withheld, and it was sufficiently important to call forth an inquiry after all that the curiosity or interest of Constance had wished to know.

"But what can he possibly mean by stopping at that poor inn, when so close to the castle?"

Constance asked this with unfeigned wonder, and in good sooth, it puzzled her aunt (whose mind, even for the best purposes, disdained dissimulation) to know how to answer. But the moment she thought was come, when by opening the subject at a distance, she might be able to ascertain more of the feelings of her niece, than she had hitherto even attempted.

"Strange to say, he fears you, Constance,"

said Lady Eleanor, "fears you, after the issue of this vexatious suit."

"Fears me!" exclaimed Constance, "this would make it a vexatious suit indeed. But we must talk no more of it. I have done thinking of it myself, nor do I wish ever to hear of it again, except as a matter of joy that it has given fortune where it will be so much better used."

"I believe you, dearest Constance," said Lady Eleanor. "But you must allow it once, and only once more to be mentioned, with a view to future determinations. You must forgive his mother, at least, a wish to spare this excellent Mortimer, what I know embarrasses his heart, the task of asking your consent to some arrangement in regard to these estates, without which I know he never will be happy."

The fears and jealousy of Constance were immediately alarmed. She perceived at once, that what her cousin had formerly glanced at, was about to be proposed in form; and she became grave, and even almost distant in her manner, as if waiting some offer which her judgment could not approve, or her pride could not accept.

"Nay," said Lady Eleanor, perceiving that her very first experiment had gone too far, "I must not mar, as I see I am doing, a good and honourable cause. Such alone can be De Vere's. I will, therefore, myself abstain from going further. But if you will permit my son to wait upon you, he will best explain himself."

"My son!" thought Constance, "permit him to wait upon me. Are we then upon such formal terms, and does his accession to fortune only throw him at a distance? My dear aunt," continued she, "I cannot understand this language;" and perhaps her gentle heart, gentle as it was, with the fear that we have mentioned, acting upon it, felt something of the heiress of Mowbray in it, when she expressed her wonder at such terms.

"Forgive us this formality," said Lady Eleanor, "and forget a mode of expression which ought never to prevail between us. But you must allow something to a new and embarrassing situation; nor can I blame Mortimer (for it is his expression) for feeling, and shewing that he feels, that if what has passed, *can* make a difference in your situations together, it is only that more respect is due to you than ever."

The thought did not displease, and Constance

fully restored, entreated her to say what it was that Mortimer had to explain.

Lady Eleanor found she had now nothing left for it but to unfold the truth. "He wishes to shew you," said she, "the total want of right that he has to the decree that has been pronounced; a decree which he thinks from the law itself, ought to have been in your favour, and thinking thus, need I add, that as a De Vere, he cannot, nay, ought not to submit to enjoy what is not his own."

"And does he think then," said Constance, with something almost amounting to pride, "that a Mowbray is so inferior to a De Vere, that I can submit to enjoy what I think not my own? If the motive of his journey is to bestow these estates upon me, I own I had expected differently from my cousin."

"*Bestow*, my dearest love," said Lady Eleanor, uneasy, "is not a word which Mortimer, which *I*, could presume to use to Lady Constance Mowbray; nor must you suppose that such a notion ever came near us."

"Why, then," said Constance, gravely, and deeply affected, "why does he suppose I can accept what my grandfather, it seems, did not choose I should enjoy. I did not know he

thought of me so meanly." In saying this, she displayed that look of reflecting determination, which, when occasion called for it, indicated that part of her character, beyond all mistaking; and Lady Eleanor was now seriously distressed.

"I see," said she, "I have undertaken a task to which I am not equal, and I had better have left it to better hands. But believe, my dearest niece, that I have meant nothing, done nothing, but what proceeded from a maternal anxiety, and an ardent wish for the happiness of you both. But, if I have mismanaged this, so as to have occasioned you one uneasy thought, I am already self-punished, and I trust I have only to ask your forgiveness, to receive it. Promise me this, dear Constance, and what is still more, promise to admit, and to hear my son."

So saying, with an air of consciousness, but also of much affection, she extended her hand to her niece, while her countenance shewed that it was not without a struggle, that she prevented a greater emotion from being discovered.

The earnestness, if not the pathos, of this appeal, disarmed Constance in a moment, and completely penetrated a heart made for all the softer virtues, though also made capable of some

little jealousy, when her sense of independence was concerned. The little excitements of her pride were therefore forgotten, and she would have kissed the hand which Lady Eleanor offered to her, had not the latter prevented her by folding her in her arms, and blessing her with a fervour which she had never shewn before. She then left her, wondering what all this could mean, and fearful that it might only be a prelude to a greater trial.

Alone, and absorbed with what had passed, the still agitated girl endeavoured to collect, if she could, all that had been intended by Lady Eleanor. The notion of a designed offer of restitution till possessed, and still offended her; and though she had cordially forgiven the little ebullition of her aunt respecting the pride of a De Vere, it is but truth to say that it had given her own pride (so mistaken was she for the moment) a stimulus in regard to the conduct meant to be pursued. "Really," said she, to herself, "if this is a visit of pride, if Mr. De Vere supposes that I am the humble creature to receive back from his munificence, what the law has so clearly shewn could never be mine; if he thinks that I can be deceived into a belief that he only is just, while judges are unjust;

if——" She could have proceeded with many more *ifs*, had this frame of mind continued, but it lasted not a moment longer than we have taken to record it. For scarcely had she in her little jealousy, conceived such a notion of her cousin, than his whole character flashed across her—his right judgment; his propriety; his respect for the independent character of others; and, above all, his never failing delicacy towards herself. This banished the unjust notion for ever, and she immediately began to tax herself with severity, for the petulance of her feelings, and this cruel censure of one who deserved it so little. "Ah! no!" she said, "Mortimer never could mean this, and owes the design he has conceived solely to the convictions of his understanding, and the justice of his heart. And even," continued the relenting Constance (relenting almost to tears, from the pride she had evinced), even if he *had* been governed by generosity; if for *me*, and to replace *me* in the situation I have lost, he is ready to return to comparative poverty *himself*, am I the person to complain? Am I the being to resent it as an insult? Too generous Mortimer; and ah, too jealous, froward, and petulant Constance!"

In this strain she proceeded, till she fell into

the opposite extreme. Her self-reproaches got the better of her, and her o'er fraught heart was so hurt with what it thought its own unworthiness, that it could no longer restrain its feeling, and she actually sobbed aloud.

If any one feel disposed to criticise these traits of character, let him recollect that we have no where professed to paint perfection; because there is no such thing. It has pleased superior wisdom to make our constitution here of such a nature, that he only is most perfect, who is least imperfect; and if Constance has had faults, it is because no one can be without them. At the same time, we know not that faults may not excite greater interest than absolute perfection. It is at least probable that we are often more pleased with a graceful recovery from error, than with that uniform surface where no error is. It is certain that the swollen heart, and charming contrition of Constance in this little trial, endeared her to Lady Eleanor, and to Mortimer, when he afterwards learned it, more than even all the faultlessness of her former life.

CHAPTER XIX.

SOMETHING VERY TENDER.

I,
Beyond all limit of what else i'the world,
Do love—prize—honour you.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE temper in which we left the dear Constance, at the end of the last chapter, was at least auspicious for De Vere, who was now seeking her, after having been for some half hour or so, closeted with his mother, during which he learned all that her zeal for him had done, and all that she had failed to do. It was clear that the offer of restitution, backed by whatever arguments, must be given up, and that the greater purpose of his heart, must alone be pursued.

Yet to open this so suddenly was what he could not easily resolve upon. He had given her so little reason to expect it; he had lately

indeed so studiously avoided the intimacy once so sweet to him; he had so little, even in his most admiring moments, appeared to court her notice with these intentions, that if he now declared them, he feared being thought sudden and capricious where he ought to be most deliberate and uniform. On the other hand, he knew nothing certain of her own feelings towards him, and had at one time even thought her distant and insensible. All this filled him with doubt and apprehension, particularly while his own contradictory conduct (as he thought it) remained unexplained. He therefore came to the resolution of postponing the full development of his hopes, and decided only to give a history of his heart under its seeming inconsistencies, so that all misunderstanding might be cleared up before he proceeded with his grand design.

With these views he sought his cousin, and found her in a small flower-garden, at the bottom of the Castle Hill, of which she was very fond, and to which she often retired to regain composure, when, as of late had not unfrequently happened, some surprise or other emotion of mind had made retreat necessary.

Though she knew he was expected, and he

had so lately been the only subject of a conversation which still absorbed her, she started as she saw him advancing up the walk to the bench where she was sitting. She rose, however, on his approach, and an unfeigned, though perhaps restrained pleasure on seeing him again, was the first sensation she experienced. She therefore very frankly gave him the hand he sought.

"It is long since we met, dear Constance," said he, "and how I am to meet you again, I hardly know. It is certain that I have dreaded this interview as if I were a criminal. But why do I say *as if*, when I feel that I am so?"

"Indeed!" said Constance, smiling very sweetly (for it was here very naturally), "and am I thought so little and so common-place, that because I have been defeated in an endeavour to keep what does not belong to me, I am to hate the right owner, as if *he* not *I* had been the wrong doer?"

"This is delightful, dear cousin," cried Mortimer, in rapture at such a reception, "but you were always an angel, and to me sometimes a guardian angel. Can you wonder then, that I have longed for this interview, nay, found it necessary to my peace? That I wish for your

permission to lay before you, what, while pent up within myself, I feel must ever keep me from being happy."

This was too particular to make Constance feel at her ease, especially after the preparatory conversation which had just passed with Lady Eleanor. She felt as if something, she knew not what, was impending of consequence to her happiness, certainly to her interest. Yet if it regarded the purpose which Lady Eleanor had opened, respecting restitution, she felt all her independence (we will not again call it her pride) reviving. She therefore waited for him to proceed, with an air of grave composure, which did not at all accord with his wishes.

A doubting lover is always a sensitive plant. This gravity filled him with fear, and he himself became grave.

"Yes!" said he, "the anxieties of the last two years have been wound up with one of so much consequence to the fortune of my cousin, and I feel myself so implicated in the mischief that has been done, that I cannot now stand before her, as the attached, may I say the protecting friend, which I flatter myself I have sometimes been thought."

"Indeed, cousin Mortimer," returned Con-

stance, "I cannot now understand you; nor do I take it as any compliment that you should suppose me so selfish or unjust as you must, when you mark our meeting with such suspicions."

"Whoever could suspect you," replied he, "of any character short of angelic, knows not my cousin: and it is to that character I would now address myself, for I have much to say."

Constance felt again alarmed, for she feared that what Lady Eleanor had intimated was now about to be opened in form; and she was so determined not to submit even to listen to proposals which she felt to be humiliating, that she would have instantly returned to the house; and she actually rose from her seat to do so, rather than suffer him to proceed.

"I frighten you," said he, perceiving her intention, "and well perhaps I may, for who has such cause as you, to be afraid of a man who, after passing through a long train of contradictions and caprices, has ended in being the invader of your rights, and the ravisher of your estates?"

"This is really cruel," observed Constance, "and I know not my cousin, who affronts me by supposing I am so wedded to these odious

estates. But when he talks of contradictions and caprices, how am I to think of what I can so little understand?"

"It will not be easy," replied De Vere, with some hesitation, "to explain all I have to unfold. But in respect to this suit, which you have justly called so odious——"

"Nay," said Constance, rising again, and now moving from her seat, "generous as I admit your purpose to be, cousin De Vere, I take it not well of you that you still return to a subject on which my sentiments are known, although my character, it seems, is so mistaken."

So saying, she moved hastily away, while De Vere, dreading to lose such an opportunity for his purpose, entreated her stay.

"Stay, I implore you," cried he, "nor misunderstand me as I see you do. My cousin, I hope, will not refuse me a minute, while I attempt to explain what I meant by contradictions and caprices, of which I feel too painfully I may have been thought guilty."

Constance, unaffectedly surprised, stopped for a moment, unable to comprehend what appeared to be so mysterious. But thinking that he still alluded to his conduct during the suit, which had

altered, as we have seen, according to the circumstances that fell out; and determined that the subject should never be entertained between them, she resumed her hurried pace, while he followed in a state of disappointment amounting to mortification. Perhaps also the great change that had taken place in their relative situations (the consequence of this very suit) had some little influence, though a secret one, on the conduct of Constance. Of all beings in the world, she was the farthest from caprice; but it was not impossible that, even without knowing it, she might think the familiar and confiding footing she had formerly been allowed by her parent to indulge with so near a relation (the *élève* of his uncle, composing part of his family, and a mere candidate for preferment), might not be so strictly proper, now that she was left without protection, and he had become the man of consequence he was.

From whatever cause, the interview seemed to be at an end; and De Vere was left to surmises not very consolatory to his heart. In regard to his chief hope, he had no certainty of his cousin's feelings towards him. He had himself exhibited, at different times, at least a difference in his demeanour towards her, which, unex-

plained, might hurt him; and though her lofty spirit could not brook even the mention of the suit, his heart yearned to tell how he felt affected by it himself. All these notions rushed into his mind as he slowly followed her, till at last, seeing the distance between them increase, he cried out, in a tone of anxious impressiveness, "Does Lady Constance then refuse the audience I have requested?"

Thus solicited, she could not but stop; and, to her still greater surprise, she beheld him big, as she thought, with some great purpose of mind, far exceeding any thing that could grow out of the disposal of an estate. She became anxious and suspicious in her turn; the *permission to wait upon her*, asked for him by Lady Eleanor, came into her mind; and the involuntary burst of admiration which escaped from him in their former conversation, respecting the seat in Parliament, could not but intrude, as indeed it frequently had intruded, on her memory, since that conversation. She, therefore, knew not what to think or expect. On the other hand, nothing could be less certain than any opinion she could form of his purpose; and when she granted the audience he requested, as she could not but do, the expectations of no

young person in such a situation, were ever less sanguine or determinate as to the end, than those of the amiable and anxious Constance. Anxious and excited, she certainly was; for disguise it as she might to her pride, considering how little he had seemed to seek her, she felt that she thought of her cousin as she did of no other man.

This mental contest, however, had the effect of making her helpless, for she suffered Mortimer gently to lead her back to the seat they had quitted. And here, with manly tenderness, mingled with that cordial respect which he bore to her virtues, he poured out his heart to her in a history of himself, which however exciting to her feelings, was for a long time so indecisive as to his real and final determination, that it bewildered, if it did not deaden whatever expectation she might have fostered.

There was, indeed, much early love; but there were many resolutions against it; and her emotions, though always excited, wore very different characters in the progress of the story.

He told her the impressions with which the very first sight of her at Litchfield had inspired him; of the uniform increase of those impressions, till they amounted to an attachment, spite

of hopeless poverty and ruined prospects, which he could never, he said, weaken, much less eradicate.

"He has then made the attempt," thought Constance, but dared not speak; when her attention became still more fixed, by his confessing that he had watched over her career in London with trembling anxiety.

"I found not, however," said he, "a fault; while your angelic conduct under Lord Mowbray's reverses, and your dignified bearing towards Lord Cleveland, raised my esteem to a point little short of adoration."

Constance listened to this declaration with mute, but intense emotion. Not a word escaped, but not a word was answered; and when he here paused, though her breathing was quick, and her cheek more and more flushed, her eyes had not yet assumed courage enough to turn towards his.

De Vere went on to expatiate on his fruitless endeavours to open to himself a way to fortune, the better to enable him to approach her; confessing that every failure had been made ten times more bitter by the thought that he had only increased the distance between them. "A distance," said he, "which I never ceased to

bewail, but religiously resolved to keep, especially when I saw you admired and courted by the nobles and princes of the land. But my joy was at its height when I found that they courted you in vain. And yet," continued he, in a mournful tone, "what was this in the end, but an additional cause for despair? For was it for me, though so near you in blood, yet so far removed from you in fortune, to succeed, where so many illustrious had failed?"

Constance shook her head, and gave a faint smile; but her cheek remained fixed upon her hand, and her eyes were still cast down. It was only her ears which were open; but though they heard what was not displeasing, they conveyed no certainties to her heart.

"Shall I proceed with this history?" said De Vere, doubtful what to augur from her determined silence, "or can I flatter myself that Lady Constance deems it worthy her attention?"

"Call me not Lady Constance," at last she said, though faintly, "I never liked it, and never shall like it again?"

Strange that these few little words, the sense of which, too, might be misapplied, immediately gave courage, and hope, and glorious joy to

him who heard them, even though they were uttered in a voice scarcely audible, and the countenance of the speaker seemed more retiring and more confused than ever.

De Vere proceeded with the story of his mind:—

"Yes!" said he, "the rejection of these high alliances only convinced me more than ever that I could not myself succeed, even had our situations been more equal; and I redoubled my efforts to overcome an affection so improperly aspiring—so destructive to my happiness."

He again paused, but the grave attention of his cousin seemed here more than ever fixed.

"I heard even," proceeded he, and here his voice faltered, "that you had spoken *contemptuously* of the presumption of my attachment—"

"Contemptuously!" exclaimed Constance, with grief and astonishment mixed; and her agitation broke in upon her collectedness. She, however, could go no farther.

"But I did not believe it," continued De Vere, "because, though I knew it would be presumptuous to declare it, *contempt* never

could be the feeling of so gentle, and at the same time so honourable a bosom, towards love unprofessed, and hopes cherished (if cherished) only in secret. Had, therefore, even a lower man than myself, in point of situation, loved you thus, I knew the modesty I had admired too well to believe it capable of despising feelings so involuntary, so humble, and so repressed."

"You were always noble-minded," said Constance, greatly affected; but she dared not herself to tell him what she felt.

"At the same time," continued he, with a more erect air, "I had something within which told me, that were our conditions more equal, whatever might be the fate of the feelings I had fostered, contempt was not the sentiment they would have inspired in my cousin."

"I cannot bear this," murmured Constance, with softness, "the very word shocks me."

"I thought as much from your excellence," said De Vere. "On one side I was of the same blood as yourself; on the other I was of an unsullied name, and whatever my value for the character I had loved; whatever my delight in the thousand sweet qualities that had won me, forgive me if I thought I had a mind which

yielded to none in its powers of appreciating them."

All this was delighting to the ear of Constance, and she could have listened long; yet still she know not what notion to form of the conclusion to which, after all, he might be coming.

"And yet," said he, "there was something in our last interview, before I went abroad—"

"Oh! name it not," said Constance, finding voice. "I remember it but too well, and my poor father—" Here her recollections checked her.

"I know it all," said De Vere, willing to spare her, "and I know how much my uncle was imposed upon by an artful man, and his still worse tool. But even without this I acquitted my noble-minded cousin."

"You were ever good and just," said Constance, pleasingly revived by this assurance.

"Yet, for the reasons I have given," said De Vere, "I wished to overcome myself, and intended to remain abroad in search of indifference, if I could find it; and perhaps——"

He paused, and Constance breathed quicker.

"But I will not dwell upon these designs,

which yielded to the change of circumstances on the continent, to the persuasions of my mother, and the news of what was passing at home; while, afterwards, the domestic calamity which so soon overtook my amiable cousin, dispelled every wish or design but to contribute to her comfort."

"Believe me I felt it as I ought," said Constance; "I felt how friendless and heart-broken I should have been but for you and a very few others."

She then returned to her listening attitude; but still involved in perplexing uncertainties.

"At length," resumed Mortimer, "this suit, and all its tumults and anxieties—Oh! if you knew the trials I underwent, the alarms for you which I felt, the opinions I entertained, and still entertain as to your rights, and the fears of Lord Cleveland, which alone brought me forward—indeed, dear Constance, though I have robbed you, you would forgive me."

"Robbed! forgive!" cried Constance; and she once more began to fear the odious subject of restitution.

"Yes," proceeded De Vere, "and my only comfort was what I am now afraid to mention, and what I am grieved to find Lady Eleanor—"

"If you mean," said Constance, interrupting him, "your generous purpose (for generous I must ever call it, spite of my late ungracious feelings upon it) of restoring these estates, I can only observe, though the offer is wholly inadmissible, I am penetrated to the heart by the intention. For I have not yet done feeling ashamed of the ungrateful petulance I shewed to Lady Eleanor, which must for ever lower the character you are pleased to say you have admired."

"Pleased to say!" hastily cried De Vere; "Is my sincerity then questioned? Is my good faith in this doubted? Alas! if my admiration of *you* is thought unreal, or my long-lasting love—greater at this instant than ever—if *this* be deemed an untruth, where—where is truth to be found?"

His whole secret was now torn from him against his intention, it should seem, and certainly before its time. For the expressions of Constance had wounded his pride. Yet were they no more than a little awkwardness of language, occasioned by her hurry to suppress a subject which she was determined not to admit. But De Vere, could he have wished for the most unequivocal proofs that his affection was

met, had them now all before him; for his last words shot into the very heart of Constance, and at once put an end to all her uncertainty as to his real purpose; though its effect upon her deprived her of her strength; her cheek became pale, her look fixed, and her whole figure motionless; so that she would have fallen, had not Mortimer caught her in his arms. The contact which this produced, resembling an embrace, necessary and involuntary as it was, brought her to herself, and the ineffable softness and innocence of the smile she gave him on recovering, spoke to him, in sweeter language than words could tell, all that his heart could wish.

CHAPTER XX.

AN INTERRUPTION.

"My lord, here are letters for you."
"I cannot read them now."

SHAKSPEARE.

THOSE who read this work as a *mere* love story (and we fear many will do so, though it is no more a love story than is necessary to illustrate a theory), will, perhaps, be disappointed at the abrupt conclusion of the last chapter. But the object of our theory being human nature, and our immediate work to analyze the heart and mind, under the influence of particular passions, —that done, we will not promise any of those inferior details, inferior in comparison with our *philosophical* object: though we are aware that these would, perhaps, be the most engaging parts of our history to many a young, and particularly many a fair reader.

We cannot tell, for we never even inquired, how many times De Vere kissed Lady Constance's hand, after they had come to this delicious understanding, so necessary, as well as so charming to them both It is sufficient to say, that though it was at a time when Sir Charles Grandison was in the height of his reputation, De Vere did not confine himself to *bowing* upon it. Nor did Constance, on her part, though at least one whole, though imperceptible hour had flown away in this extraordinary dream (for so it appeared), utter any fear that they might be thought to have been together too long, or that people would wonder at it, or that she was afraid that Lady Eleanor might be coming,—as many very prudent, very discreet, and very passionless young ladies, even after declaration, have sometimes been known to do. Defend me from such discretion! or such regard for time, as the mistress of a friend of mine once displayed, when, during one of his most passionate ebullitions, she asked him what o'clock it was.

Such a woman, in her softest moments (we will not give the whole quotation), might indeed

> " Mark the figures on an Indian chest,
> And while she sees her friend in deep despair,
> Observe how much a chintz exceeds mohair."

But such a one was not Constance. No! with the frankest nature in the world, yet with a modesty all her own, she confessed the secret of her heart, now De Vere had really made her feel what it was, by so entire a disclosure of his own; which discovery, if the reader think it rather of the latest, we have nothing to say against it. Be this as it will, Constance never in her life looked so lovely; for there is no cosmetic in the world, which is such a heightener of beauty, as that soft and virgin confession of affection, which comes but once, and comes no more.

This was felt by De Vere in every pulse of his heart.

These were, indeed, heavenly moments; and so absorbing was the happiness, that every distant sound, and even every rustling leaf, made him tremble in the fear of interruption. He feared even his mother; though his heart was impatient to tell her what he knew it would be the best joy of hers to hear. He was therefore vexed, and as angry as such a moment would allow, to be sought out by a king's messenger whom he had known when in waiting on his uncle, and who now belonged to Mr. Wentworth.

The messenger had evidently made speed,

and was ordered, he said, to deliver the packet of which he was the bearer, to no one but Mr. De Vere himself.

But love is above all the prime ministers in the world—in the world of Christendom, at least—for we will not swear that De Vere would have done at Constantinople as he did on this occasion, in remanding the messenger to the castle, and putting the letter into his pocket,—at the same time declaring, that nothing which man could write, could equal in value, the thousandth part of a minute of the felicity he was then enjoying.

Constance thanked him with her eyes, and with a pleased smile, which she neither could, nor meant to restrain; but, at length, contracting her fine features, which had expanded with happiness, into a look of prudence, she chided him for not examining his packet.

"How know you," said she, "that the fate of England may not depend upon it?"

"Dear Constance," replied De Vere, "if the fate of the world depended upon it, provided it left this dear spot in safety, I am afraid I should be selfish enough not to care so much for it, as I do for the interruption which it has given to the sweetest moment of my life."

Constance said no more about the packet, for, in truth, this speech made her forget every thing but itself. But the agitation she had undergone, the vicissitudes of feeling which had shaken her, pleaded more powerfully with De Vere, than her injunctions. He felt, indeed, the necessity, for both their sakes, of giving a truce to the excitement which both had experienced; and, seeing that she shewed evident signs of exhaustion, he himself proposed that they should return to the castle. "It will do us both good," said he, "to be alone."

"Me it certainly will," replied Constance, faintly, and she refused not his arm as he supported her home.

There, indeed, her heart expanded in a thankfulness and joy, which were unalloyed. But the joy was sedate, not exuberant She reposed for a long time in her cabinet, without speaking a word. Her eye, indeed, pursued the windings of the Dove in the plain beneath, or rested upon the wood-crowned steeps of the distant hills. It darted "from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven," and continued for many minutes to be thus occupied. And yet she could scarcely be said to be sensible of the

landscapes she surveyed. Her mental eye was closed.

Happiness of mind, indeed, is always, what we have called her's, *sedate.* That which belongs to the spirits is of a more stirring kind. But heaven forefend that this last should ever be undervalued! Like Horatio's, it is often all that many a light-hearted wretch has "to feed and clothe him." But Constance was too much occupied with the seeming wonders which had attended the last few short weeks, and the bountifulness which seemed still shed over her lot, to allow her feeling to evaporate in any violent expression of it. The character of her mind was cheerful, but modest propriety, and it shewed itself here. Her first emotions were those of thankfulness; her next, of astonishment, that she should be still marked out for favour by heaven (for so it seemed), without any merit of her own, without any claim to be thus distinguished.

"I have never even yet been tried," said she, "by particular misfortune; and oh! if it does overtake me, eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial to my proportioned strength!"

She then indulged in reverie upon all that had befallen her; befallen her, she thought, so

mysteriously. That she should have been so pursued by Lord Cleveland, and that he should have so strangely acquired the means, and consequent temptation, to invade her fortune; that, though he had failed, another should reap the benefit, and that other Mortimer—the man whose childhood had so impressed, whose manhood so charmed her; charmed her by all those graces of mind and manner so peculiarly delighting to *feminine propriety*; all this was astonishing! But when she added to this that the success of her cousin should have brought about what she now felt more home than ever, from his recent declarations, would never, without it, have been accomplished: this, this indeed seemed the immediate work of that kind and bounteous Providence which she had ever worshipped with feelings of gratitude and reverence.

To that Providence, therefore, she now poured out her soul in an unrestrained burst of thankfulness, which, as it did good to her full mind at the time, so would it to many a heart callous from prosperity, and now revelling in it with hard and thankless indifference.

Mortimer, on his part, though more active, was scarcely less rapt. With his packet still unopened, he tried to collect his scattered senses; but he only

collected them by remembering and repeating many poetical effusions on the fascinations of women: particularly such passages as these—

> "Imagine something 'tween young men and angels,
> Fatally beauteous, having killing eyes;
> Their voices charm like nightingales;
> They are all enchantment: those who once behold
> Are made their slaves for ever."

It is certain, that if in this wild luxuriance of language old Dryden painted women as something between young men and angels, Constance appeared to De Vere what was afterwards applied to the most fascinating of her time, the connecting link between angel and woman.*

After this he sought his mother, and delighted her matron heart with the tidings which he knew would be most precious to it. There was something peculiarly amiable in the tenderness of his attention to this venerable woman. Like mercy, it was twice blessed; for it blessed him that gave and her that received. His love for her was, indeed, all that could make a son's love acceptable, for it was compounded of the best sort of affection, added to the most entire

* The first Mrs. Sheridan.

reliance upon her judgment, and the highest admiration of her principle.

De Vere was, however, at last left alone with his packet; and what was his surprise to find, among other arrangements, communicated by Mr. Wentworth, a proposal that he should go into the House of Peers by the name of De Bolebec, Sandford, or any other old title held by former De Veres.

"That your birth would recommend it," said the letter, "now that your fortune is not unsuitable to your birth, no one will deny: and as our principles are, perhaps, not so popular among their Lordships as with the Commons, your support may be more efficacious there than where less wanted. This, I own, is my first motive: but very little behind it is the pleasure I have in making this offer to the friend of my esteem. On other accounts, too, it may not be ineligible, as we want you in place: and what Flowerdale told you is very true—for some offices you are too proud, for others, at present, too humble. May I add, without offending you, that it may give a grace to what I know is the pursuit of your heart. I do not mean that it will ever weigh one feather with that noble Constance that you should be a peer: but it *may*

be agreeable to *you* that you can make *her* a peeress."

There was a frank kindness in this offer, and still more in the mode of making it, which greatly affected De Vere; and when, in the evening, he laid it before those who, next to himself, were most concerned, the concluding part drew tears from her who was so delicately mentioned. Oh, said De Vere, that all ministers knew how little beholden they are to artificial phraseology—how infinitely better served by the language of plain truth!

The proposal, however, was not one to be slighted, and it called for immediate answer, so immediate that it only added to De Vere's embarrassment (for he was embarrassed) how to decide. His mother desired not to be even consulted. She was pleased at the mark of consideration shewn him, and particularly pleased with the thought that the De Veres might once more rank in the peerage, which, said she, they once so adorned. She thought, too, with a sigh, of the extinction of the Mowbrays, and evidently felt elevated, from every family consideration, by the offer which had been made. "But no wish of mine," said she, "son Mortimer, shall, for it ought not to sway you.

Decide as it seems best to your own views of right, and I am sure the decision will not, cannot be wrong."

So saying, she desired not to hear of the subject again till the answer had been returned; a resolution which was shared by the right judging Constance. "It would be to wrong you," said she, "to let a private wish, if I had one, influence what I know you will decide upon the grounds of propriety alone."

De Vere, congratulating himself on being so well supported by the persons he most loved in the world, said he would take the night for his counsellor.

The result was, that the next morning the offered honour was declined; but declined with gratitude, and on characteristic grounds. "Think me not," said he, "so falsely proud, so indiscriminatingly common-place, as not to view the peerage as I ought. 'Tis a great and high order, and privileged for the most useful, the most noble purposes; to hold the balance, as it often has, between too much liberty, and a too aspiring prerogative. The country must ever be proud of its peers; and that man is silly, or worthless, who disparages the order, and ridiculous who affects to disdain it. Had I

been born to the peerage, therefore, proud should I have been. But to those who have to achieve the honour, 'tis a Temple of Fame, and must not be entered, except from desert. Let me merit a place in it, after service *performed*, and gladly will I accept it. To take it as a *retaining* fee for service *to be done*, accords not with my views of that freedom from all motive but *approbation*, which is, and alone will be, my reason for supporting you."

The messenger had long been dispatched with this answer, before De Vere shewed a copy of it to his mother and cousin.

"Had it been different," said Lady Eleanor, "I should have been not displeased; as it is, I am pleased and proud too."

Constance said little, but thought much. In truth, this spirit of independence was too like her own not to meet with all her approbation; while her admiration of the character of her cousin seemed raised higher and higher, and her heart only glowed more deeply at the thought of the soft ties by which such a man was about to be united to her for life.

We may suppose that the recent declaration was communicated on the instant to her guardians; and we may suppose, too, that no cloud

arose from their quarter to cast a gloom over her felicity. London, as well as Castle Mowbray, were therefore occupied with a history which had all the air of a romance; but it was a romance pleasing to all who had any room in their hearts for the pleasures of real sentiment, or the admiration of a noble nature. Lord Cleveland, indeed, attempted to ridicule it, by calling it a childish legend, in which De Vere was the knight, Constance the oppressed damsel, and himself the giant. But he could get no one to join in the ridicule; on the contrary, he often heard the story mentioned with allusions too little favourable to his self-love to make him happy. But of him hereafter.

And indeed, except Cleveland, we have little more to say of any one of the personages of our history. That history being nearly concluded, so are the lessons which we wished to inculcate, drawn from the examples with which we have been busy; for all lessons of moral instruction are over, when the passions are quieted, and struggle is no more.

We fear, therefore, it will be our lot to disappoint many of our readers, who may fondly expect that, after the example of our great predecessors, we have to present a glowing descrip-

tion of a marriage, surpassing all marriages that ever went before. But this is neither our purpose, nor our taste. Our subject has been the human heart. We have, therefore, no train of coaches to describe; no anxious bridesmaids, hoping that it will be their turn next; no superb dresses, no maidens strewing flowers, not even a band of music, a dance for the tenants, or a feast for the poor.

True, all these were here; but our business is, we trust, of a higher nature than to describe them. We may relate, indeed, the pleasure of the excellent Herbert, in performing the ceremony; of Wentworth and Harclai, in attending it; of the marquess, who gave away the bride; and of Lady Eleanor, and Lady Clanellan, who blessed her with tears of joy, of pride, and approbation. But with no more will we trust ourselves.

There are, however, two or three particulars which we wish still to record, in regard to public affairs. The aspect of these was so changed for the better, and public men grew so altered in character, that De Vere delighted to mix among them, and to own to the good and observing Herbert, that *his* view of mankind, even of the political part of it, might be the true one. In

fact, unblushing self-interest was no longer the order of the day. Under the auspices of Wentworth, and the virtue of the sovereign, high and aspiring spirits started up of a different cast from those which had disgraced preceding years, and gentlemen became ashamed of not being gentlemen in public, as well as in private life. The little, low, trading politician, if not annihilated, was at least discouraged, and became comparatively contemptible. Men served themselves indeed, but in a way to shew that to serve one's self, is perfectly compatible with sincerity in serving the state. Hence, De Vere acknowledged the soundness of Herbert's exposition, that this was no more than in unison with the general intentions of the Author of Nature, who has expressly contrived to make the consideration of self, when properly regulated, a most efficacious mean of promoting universal good. De Vere, therefore, in time, was cured of the spleen, which we own some particular examples of hypocrisy and depravity near him, had created. He admitted that public life, as he now saw it pursued, both by ministers and opposition, was full of as virtuous interest as any thing in private, while it was a great deal more honourable, from the talents and sacrifice of personal ease,

which it demanded. His fortune, indeed, and his happiness with that spotless Constance, made him continue to resist Wentworth's persuasions as to office; but he became active in parliamentary support and attendance, and headed a considerable band of great country gentlemen, who, agreeing to act in a body, became of immense weight and consequence in all general questions upon the public weal. In these, De Vere's good sense, as well as his independence, had full room to shew themselves; and Wentworth was not more delighted with him as a friend, than proud of him as one of the best supports of his government.

And here we should close, but that, in justice to that superior minded Wentworth (superior for the genuine elevation of his heart, as well as his unequalled talents), it is only right to state a little more in detail, what in fact wrought wonders for him with the nation, and yet was the only and simple secret of his government. And with this detail, we finish our labours.

CHAPTER XXI.

POETICAL JUSTICE.

But I'll report it
Where senators shall mingle tears with smiles;
Where great patricians shall attend and shrug;
I' the end admire.

SHAKSPEARE.

My dear, dear lord,
The purest treasure mortal times afford,
Is spotless reputation.

SHAKSPEARE.

ALL eyes were turned upon the opening of Mr. Wentworth's administration. The question of the dissolution of parliament, had not been determined, and his opponents hoped that it would be determined in the negative. They knew that their only chance of making a great demonstration, was while they continued to be composed of so many friends of the old ministry.

Mr. Wentworth knew this too, and he was instigated to dissolve by many of his supporters who still retained some of the maxims of the old school. But he had an ambition of his

own, which was to try (having proclaimed his principles) what stand he could make against his opponents, with all the advantages they retained from having been in power when the parliament was chosen. For this he was blamed by some, and sneered at by many. Lord Oldcastle's adherents talked and looked big. "We shall see," said they, "what this visionary, this patriot minister, will be able to do with his new notions of public virtue, which we know, whatever it may do elsewhere, cannot exist in the cabinet of a statesman." But Lord Oldcastle, and his adherents, unfortunately for themselves, had formed their notions of the world upon such maxims as those of Halifax, Bolingbroke, and Chesterfield; able men, but whose principles concerning mankind were but little reverenced by Wentworth: and, thank Heaven, have been demonstrated to be false, by the purer practice of succeeding years. A public man is now, as we have observed, ashamed of dishonesty, in word or deed; and, in particular, would be ashamed of that maxim of Halifax which holds, that it is only the fools and knaves in it, who compose the world; "for that the few who have sense, or honesty, *sneak* up and down singly, but never go in herds."

The first act of Wentworth greatly confounded his opponents. A preceding minister had, upon a case (whether with or without real claim), rewarded one of his friends with an immense pension. The grant was for life, and could not be reviewed. Within a week after Wentworth's appointment, a sinecure place to an equal amount fell in. He was instantly besieged by a host of applicants, some of them of the first families and consequence in the kingdom. He refused them all, and appointed the great pensioner to the place; thus saving the pension to the nation.

The party of opposition were at first aghast at this proof of sincerity in Wentworth's principles: and, when they recovered, had nothing left but to sneer, and to ridicule. It, however, made a great impression upon many members, and upon the nation at large.

A considerable question then approached; and a member not greatly respected, but one who from his own means influenced two votes, applied urgently and perseveringly for a particular church-preferment for his brother. Whether the application might have been listened to, may be a question; but hints were given, mildly, though intelligibly, that if com-

plied with, the votes might be fixed for government on the impending question; leaving the alternative to be divined as it might. Mr. Wentworth suspended his answer till the claims of the party were compared with some others. The question came on; division was called for, and while the opposition were going out, the member who had applied, came close to the minister, and whispering in his ear, " Sir," said he, " I now ask you for the last time, whether you mean to grant my request or not?"

" Certainly not," cried Wentworth, with emphasis; and the member immediately went out. At that moment two votes were lost to government by this; but the story being told, six were afterwards gained.

But what Wentworth's opponents most sneered at, and what some even of his friends were disposed to blame, was his conduct to several dependants in his own office, who asked leave of absence to attend a contested election. It was signified to him that they were in the interest of the opposing candidate, whose favour had placed them where they were. " I respect their motives," said he, " and will not let them be restrained."

During all this time, Lord Cleveland, though

he hated Wentworth, and wished to revenge himself on the king, actually stood aloof, and formed his troops into an army of observation. In this he was actuated by two motives, resentment against Lord Oldcastle; and a desire which his disgusts at home had made him feel, to pass some time in splendour abroad. He therefore caused it to be signified to Mr. Wentworth, that if the embassy to a great first-rate power were offered him, he would accept it, and meantime he might count upon his parliamentary support. A nobleman of high character, but of little more party consequence than that character gave him, had already been selected, and Wentworth's answer was straight forward, that it was engaged.

Lord Cleveland returned, that he knew his support was of ten times more consequence than that of the nobleman in question, and that Wentworth had better consider of it.

The *visionary* minister replied that he *had* considered of it, and could not break his word. Lord Cleveland's whole force immediately moved over to the ranks of opposition. The loss, however, was more than compensated; for Wentworth, to whom the proposal had been made in any thing but confidence, and who had received

a mandate, rather than been consulted, shewed him up to the House, and through the House to the country.

"As I have no pride," said he, "in such support, so I value it not, and count not upon its advantages. What is made a matter of bargain, may at any time be had; but my object is the real approbation of my country, not the hollow alliance of mendicant self-interest."

The satisfaction which all this consistency between principle and practice, gave to De Vere, may be conceived. His old notions of public men, as we have said, gave way, and his feelings were fully participated by the country. Addresses poured in from many quarters on the change of ministry; the ranks of opposition, notwithstanding Cleveland's accession, became thinner and thinner, and then, and not till then, did the patriot minister determine upon dissolving the parliament.

The contest was great, but glorious for *him*. His superiority was felt every where, except in the immediate strong holds of his opponents, and even there he sometimes met with unexpected victory. Lord Cleveland, in particular, felt the shock; for, to the honour of the English character, let it be recorded, that when his late private con-

duct in the law suit, and his late public conduct respecting the embassy, were known, and all their details minutely developed, parties were formed in opposition to him whenever there was the least opening for public opinion to express itself. The bold disclosures of the minister of the real reasons of his opposition, told fearfully against him; and, as much of his borough influence had been personal, he lost nearly one half of his strength. It maddened him with rage, and he gave almost every body to the devil. He felt that the principle on which he had sometimes piqued himself, of despising the opinion of the world, could only hold when it depended upon superior virtue, not upon superior pride; yet he determined, if he could, to *brave* the world.

And for a time he *did* brave it; and for a time, whatever his unhappiness within, his outward intrepidity was at its height.

Instead of flying, he every where courted notice. He was in every circle, at every place of amusement, attended every debate in both Houses; and, in the peers, affected to talk much to the chancellor who had so discomfited him, and by whom it was remarked, that nothing but his character could keep down his parts, and

nothing but his parts support him under his character. The actual presence at court was the only place which he avoided; but he was often seen on levee days at the palace-gate, kissing his hand to his acquaintance as they went in; nay, sometimes going in with them, in his undress, and stopping only short of the presence chamber itself. To explain this, he gave out, and thought it was believed, that he disdained going farther, because he had quarrelled with the king.

It is certain he at first relaxed nothing in his brilliancy of life; and if any thing could justify this, it would have been the subserviency which he seemed to meet with from many men and many women of the world. His table was never better served, and his guests never less numerous, nor of less quality. Poets and artists tendered him their works; his equipages were still the most showy in London; his water parties still the most gay on the Thames, and his authority still much deferred to at the clubs. All this was blazoned forth daily by the public press, and no one thought of questioning (or at least shewed him that they questioned) the morality or honour of his conduct towards the minister or Lady Constance. No one blamed

(or shewed him that they blamed) him for offering to sell his political support, or for tampering with a highwayman for the means of acquiring wealth; though all now agreed that there had been neither justice, honour, nor common sense in the claim which had been defeated.

There was but one man not actually ranged against him in party hostility, who visited him outwardly with the reprobation he felt within; and that man was his sovereign. Such is the power which the trappings of the world too often possess, to cover, for a while, the defects and rottenness beneath them.

But was Lord Cleveland unpunished even in this world? Was he really, during all this time, the gay minion he affected to be? Let no one think so. He carried that about him, and within him, which the slaves (I think them no other), who honoured, or rather who did not dishonour him with their lips, would not have endured for all his splendour. A corroding self-blame was eating deeper and deeper into his heart. A canker had withered every hope of his life. To him, indeed, hope had been what it has been called, "though the miserable man's good, the presumptuous man's *devil*." It is certain that, like the fiend of evil, it had had "power to as-

sume a pleasing shape," and abused him to damn him. In short, every pursuit that depended upon himself had failed, and all the rest, he knew, belonged only to his titles, his wealth, and his magnificence, when he would have given half his fortune that they should have belonged to his person, his character, and his virtues.

All this he knew, for he had too much penetration to be deceived. He knew that in reality he was hated by most; despised by many; beloved of none. Yet he had the misery of being peculiarly alive to these considerations. Thus, like Macbeth, he saw that he received nothing but—

"Mouth-honour, breath
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not."

And this continued, till, like the same tyrant, he felt that his May of life had fallen into

"The sear and yellow leaf,
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
He must not look to have."

This made him wretched, and the longer he lived the more sullen and morose he became, till his high blown pride at length broke under

him. He then altered his whole style of living, extinguished the brilliancy of his house, lost all taste for elegance, and ceased to feel the excitements of society. It was then that he felt the exact estimation in which he had been held; for his associates fell off; the world, even the profligate world, no longer admired; and, amidst the throng of its votaries, he lived in solitude.

Avarice was now the only passion left him—what joy that brings, we know. Childless, wifeless, and without a friend, he had none of those soft and amiable consolations on which advancing age reposes, making its calmness equal in enjoyment to the activity of youth. On the contrary, his disappointed heart plunged deep into misanthropy for a cure, and every instance of happiness, success, or honour, acquired by others, carried torture to himself.

As he advanced in years he was still farther afflicted; for the total misuse of his life *here* began to give him unhappy forebodings of what might be to come. To remedy, therefore, this, he endeavoured to confirm his only half pondered scepticism, and take refuge in infidelity. But he failed even in this.

The consequence to his mental peace may be

imagined. Under all outward appearances, therefore, let no one think, notwithstanding the splendid gifts with which Providence had tried Lord Cleveland, that, even in this world, the abuse of them was left unpunished.

Contrast this with De Vere, with Constance, with Wentworth, and with Lord and Lady Clanellan; and think (for you safely may), that though every thing about us shews this life to be meant for a state of trial, not of unmixed happiness, still that the good preponderates over the evil. There is nothing, indeed, that has been related in these pages which does not prove that an honourable mind and a virtuous heart may even here achieve some portion of that happiness which is ultimately designed for them.

With this feeling, and the comfort that belongs to it, reader, I bid thee farewell.

THE END.